

INDIAN RADICALISM SINCE 1905 WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO M.N. ROY

ABSTRACT

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## ABSTRACT

### INDIAN RADICALISM SINCE 1905 WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO M.N. ROY

Radicalism as a mode of political action is a product of the nineteenth century evolving into an articulate shape along with the industrial revolution. It views society as an human organization created essentially for achieving the welfare of all but liable to a failure to be responsive to and representative of the totality of its constituents. The goal of radicalism is to reconstruct and regenerate society to make it achieve its original objective not by the method of evolutionary change but by a rapid and comprehensive transformation to be achieved through dynamic political activism including the use of unorthodox and unconventional political techniques. Radicals proceed on the basis of a critical and complete theory of society which abjures doctrinaireism and accept the possibility of continuous change of political approach.

The initial phase of Indian Nationalism was the product of the endeavours and aspirations of the middle classes that emerged as a peculiar product of the economic and political transformation of India brought by the British rule in the nineteenth century. It was exemplified by the Indian National Congress which was more an eclectic political movement than a political party. The leaders of the Congress in its first twenty five years (the Moderates) were men moulded by the nineteenth century British liberalism and Constitutionalism. They postulated the idea of collaborating with the Britishers

to overcome the social and economic backwardness of the country and of persuading the British rule to broaden its base and liberalise its spirit by the incorporation of an Indian element in its establishment. They believed in constitutional methods, but lost their hold on the popular imagination when their political programme failed to find adequate response from British imperialism. This set the stage for the stirrings of radicalism in the Indian national movement under the leadership of the extremists. There were besides ideological and sociological factors at work behind extremism. It proclaimed the ideal of achieving self government not through the benevolence of the rulers but by the self conscious self assertion of the people. They built up a comprehensive critique of the imperial regime clarifying it as a system to be replaced by an alternative system representative of and responsive to the people. They preached the doctrine of mass popular action as an essential element in forcing concessions out of the rulers. However extremism and its direct political successors exemplified by Mahatma Gandhi had important drawbacks from the ideal of political radicalism. In the first place they had limited vision of the role of the masses -- the masses were to be mobilised and led instead of providing the motive force of political dynamism. Besides their programme lacked a comprehensive scheme for an economic transformation to accompany the political transformation they conceived for society. Further they depended to quite an extent on religio-mystic symbols, images and metaphors instead of on concrete political, social

and economic formulation in mobilizing the national movement. This situation existed in late nineteen twenties and what was required was a new political ideological current to transform the congress from a merely mass oriented political movement to a truly radical movement postulating a comprehensive political economic and social ideology and specific programmes and objectives derived from it, besides basing itself on the masses instead of only making them a point of reference. A major part of this function was fulfilled by M.N. Roy.

Roy after the partition of Bengal at the age of fourteen influenced by the nationalist feelings and revolutionary situation decided to join the revolutionary movement. Roy thus makes his debut on the Indian political scene as a revolutionary extremist engaged in organizing and executing terrorist activities. It was in this period that Roy left the shores of India to procure arms and aid from diverse quarters for the Indian revolutionary movement terminating his trends in Mexico. In the course of his odyssey he was introduced to the writings of Marx and his sojourn in Mexico marked his transformation from a nationalist terrorist to a Marxist. In Mexico Roy formed a socialist party and Borodin named him a delegate to the second Congress of the Communist International. This marks the end of the first phase of Roy's life and career, a phase which is politically and ideologically barren.

With the second Comintern Congress begins the second phase of Roy's career which spanned the years till 1940. Roy



makes his appearance on the International Marxist scene, ardently involved, ideologically and emotionally in the world communist movement. The second Comintern Congress has an impor- tant place in the development of communist policy for the under-developed areas of the world. Roy played a significant role in the Second Comintern Congress, especially in its deliberations on Imperialism and Nationalism in the colonial world, making a mark as a dissenter from Lenin's views on the nature and dynamics of the struggle of the colonial people. Lenin was of the view that in the initial stages when anti-colonial feeling is strong the national-bourgeoisie could be a progressive force therefore collaboration with the national bourgeoisie is desirable. Roy's positive contribution was that he drew attention to the compromising tendency in the bourgeois democratic liberation movement in the colonies and semi-colonies and thus raised the question as to how the Communist International and the communist parties were to develop the revolutionary movement in colonies and semicolonies. This important debate in the second Comintern Congress was the first attempt to formulate a policy which would successfully merge the revolutionary aspirations of the nationalist anti-colonialism and Communist anti Capitalism.

In the succeeding years Roy attempted to develop a revolutionary movement in India (he was the sole advisor to the Communist International on Indian Affairs). He established contacts with the <sup>e</sup> leaders of the national movement as well as with leaders of revolutionary societies and younger intellec-

tuals who were getting dissatisfied and disillusioned with Gandhiji's programme of work and his non-violent methods. With this aim he also began publishing the 'Vanguard' later known as 'Masses' and also wrote a number of books - India in Transition, Future of Indian Politics, Aftermath of Non-Cooperation. These writings of Roy were instrumental in giving Indian intellectuals an introduction to Communism and Marxism and placed before them for the first time a concrete programme of socio-economic revolution. These writing of Roy did exercise a lasting influence on younger generation and intellectuals. As a result of his efforts communist groups developed, in the twenties in a number of places like Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, Lahore and Madras. Roy (as the British Intelligence Report acknowledges) was the main factor responsible for the spectacular growth of communist movement during the twenties. His role however, was not confined to this, through the Khilafat Movement, Bengal revolutionary societies and the trade Unions he made a collective effort to radicalize the entire national movement as such. This is not suggesting that no earlier attempts had been made at radicalization. The extremists - Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo-Ghose had made attempts in this direction earlier, but their political philosophy was not a systematic whole and was not logically worked out. Mahatma Gandhi also attempted the task of radicalization but his ideology also suffered from much the same type of ambiguities as that of the extremists, a comprehensive socio-economic political approach was lacking. The point is that a comprehensive socio-economic political

philosophy, radical in ideology and technique relevant to the problems of resurgent India was needed. Roy put forward such an ideology and programme. His was the first significant effort to radicalise the national movement through the ideology and programme of socialism. Throughout the succeeding period of our national struggle socialist ideas gradually gained currency, exemplified on the one extreme by the rise and growth of the Communist party, the labour movement, Workers and Peasant Parties, on the other hand by the emergence and growth of the left wing within the congress and later the Congress Socialist party. Besides under his guidance and advice the communists successfully entered the labour field in the major industrial centres of India. The strikes of 1928-1929 do clearly indicate that the workers of India were emerging as a political force, a development of significance.

During these years he was also playing a very significant role within the Comintern particularly in the formulation of policies for the colonial world. By the mid twenties he reached the height of his career in the Comintern. At this stage he was dispatched to China along with Borodin (1926) to direct the Chinese revolution on the lines suggested by the Comintern. The debacle of the Chinese Communist movement obliged Roy to withdraw to Moscow and thereafter on account of major differences with Stalin to Berlin. The failure of the Chinese revolution was a blow to Roy's career within the Comintern. The Sixth Congress of the Comintern (1928) clearly revealed it. At the Congress Roy was characterized as a 'Lackey of Imperialism'.

The charge was absolutely unfounded it was merely an excuse. The Comintern had decided to take a sharp turn to the left and as Roy did not see any reason to abandon the 'united-front' approach therefore he had to be sacrificed. He was in sharp disagreement with the new Comintern line as a result he was expelled from the comintern. Disillusioned by the nature the International Communist movement was acquiring after the Sixth Comintern Congress, but with his faith in Marxism intact, Roy made his way to India. In India there was considerable political turmoil then, and a new upsurge was clearly seen in the national movement, particularly on account of the new wave of repression by the British rulers, the first target of which was the nascent communist movement. In connection with the 'Meerut Conspiracy Case' all leading communists had been taken into custody. The younger comrades who took their places had neither the experience nor the capacity. They placed themselves in opposition to the national movement by blindly following the line advocated by the 6th Comintern Congress. Thus they not only destroyed the communist movement which had been built-up in the twenties but they were also missing a unique opportunity to radicalize penetrate and capture the national movement. A process of class differentiation was at work within the Indian National Congress, an increasing number of Congressmen dissatisfied with Gandhian approach were already advocating socialism.

In the three years before his imprisonment (July 1931) Roy built up a small group of dedicated followers (the Royists) and made a determined attempt to rejuvenate the working class

movement. Within a few weeks after his landing (December, 1930) in Bombay he established contacts with the leaders of the national movement particularly with the leftists in the Congress and successfully persuaded them to work for the induction of socio-economic goals in the Congress programme and to mobilise workers and peasants movement within the Congress fold. Roy in short wanted to strengthen the socialist elements in the Congress till then diffused and dispersed in the personal orientations of few individual Congressmen. There is no doubt that his influence was considerable. The Congress resolution on 'Fundamental Rights' adopted at the famous Karachi Session clearly establishes the point. Roy was present at the session and was the 'moving spirit' behind the resolution. The resolution on 'Fundamental Rights' was the first commitment of the Congress on socio-economic goals. He also took a keen interest in the revival of trade union movement which had been destroyed as a consequence of the ultra left line pursued by the Indian Communists. The 'Draft Platform of Unity' prepared by him became the basis of uniting the trade union movement in the thirties. Roy also took up the peasants cause before being arrested, their condition to him appeared highly deplorable. The taking up of the peasants cause served a double purpose. On the one hand he was able to draw the attention of the educated public to their miserable condition, on the other hand he compelled the Congress to go to the villages and take up their cause. Thus Roy compelled the Congress to broaden its base. He was arrested in July 1931 and released in November 1936.

During his confinement his followers (Royists) continued to work on the lines suggested by him. In the labour field the Roy Group emerged as a force and they later succeeded in uniting the trade union movement. It was because of his mature guidance that the Royists along with socialists (by 1936) succeeded in controlling the AITUC. By constantly emphasizing the relevance of socio-economic goals, Roy gave the Congress party in particular and the national movement in general a sense of direction. By taking up the peasants cause he compelled the Indian National Congress to broaden its base thereby radicalizing its lower rank and file, thus converting the Congress into a more representative organization. During this period the radicalization of the national movement is also exemplified by the rise and growth of the Congress Socialist Party. The C.S.P. had two aims -- to establish an anti imperial front and to make the Congress a mass organization. (Roy had already expressed similar views). During the early years of the C.S.P. the Royists were much active within the party and contributed substantially in giving the C.S.P. programme and policies a socialistic orientation. The C.S.P. Plan and programme evolved on the lines suggested by Roy (see Chapter IV). The C.S.P. wanted the Congress to give its policies a socio-economic orientation and to create a social base for the extension of democracy, Roy had been advocating similar views for quite some time.

Over the years Roy gradually became sceptical about the ideological commitments of the C.S.P. leaders, and he also realised that the party was isolating itself from the national

struggle. Therefore after being released he joined the Indian National Congress and till the beginning of the second world war made many sided attempts to radicalize and democratise the Congress party so that the party could be made into a more effective instrument of national revolution. By emphasising the importance of the role of the mass base of the Congress, by projecting the idea of broader unity of leftist forces within and outside the Congress he wanted to sharpen the contradictions between the conservatives and progressives in the Congress leadership. During these years 1936-1939 though by conviction still a Marxist, Roy had certainly outgrown the doctrinaireism of his earlier days. His approach was now a pragmatic one weighing the limitations and potentialities of the Congress in adopting a socialist orientation. The cumulative effect was that the left wing within the Congress did gain strength, their growing strength and force is clearly revealed in the Congress presidential elections during 1937 to 1939 and in the labour field (Chapter V). The Congress was compelled by the left to adopt radical socio-economic resolutions and broaden its base. In short during the 1930's Roy's many sided efforts created a consensus for socialism within the national movement.

The year 1948 marked the beginning of the last phase of Roy's career. He disowned Marxism and gradually drifted away from the dominant stream of the national movement. But this dual alienation did not diminish his involvement in the idea of emancipation and of the humanitarian ends of social organization and thus he developed the philosophy of New Humanism. New Humanism was an effort on his part to evolve a new social and

ethical philosophy which in application would be free from the inadequacies of Liberalism and Marxism. But really speaking Roy merely revived the humanism of the pre-marxian days. The values of New Humanism are all by and large liberal values besides there are many contradictions in the philosophy of New Humanism. The last phase of Roy's career (1940-1954) thus marked his disillusionment with ideology as such and with the shape the political forces in India were acquiring. Properly speaking it is a phase of withdrawal characterizing frustrations. But all recent studies on Roy have tended to concentrate on the last phase of his life and on the evolution and nature of New Humanism, to the extent that one is tempted to conclude that scholars have made a deliberate effort to highlight his critique of Marxism and to undermine his role as a Marxist in the national movement. As a result a distorted picture of Roy and his work has emerged. Even recent studies on the political and ideological movement in India have often ignored and minimized the role of M.N. Roy, or have undermined it by a disproportionate emphasis on the last and to a certain extent, the negative phase of his life. Certain traits of his personality and the stand he took during the second world war did contribute to his unpopularity. But historical truth cannot be established by these factors alone. In other words to place the role of Roy in its proper perspective the totality of his career has to be taken into account. Thus there is an overriding need to examine the usually neglected part of his career, i.e., from 1920 to 1940. The present work is an effort to highlight the neglected second phase of his work.



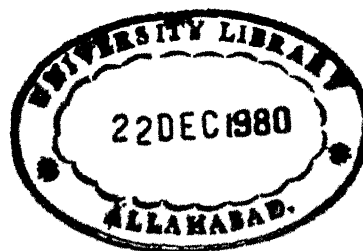
The study of the second phase of his life and work clearly reveals that he was the moving spirit behind the radicalization of the national movement during the period and this certainly gives him an important place in the history of Indian political movement. This is his most significant contribution, besides the broad structure of the Indian Left to-day can be conceived in the political evolution of Roy's views during these years (1920-1940). The point is what the Indian Left (whether it is the C.P.M. or C.P.I. or Congress - R) is advocating to-day was put forward and advocated by Roy at sometime or the other during the second phase of his life. In this sense also the second phase of his life appears more meaningful and positive thus gives him an important place in contemporary Indian history and thought.





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## PREFACE

In recent years a number of studies have appeared on the life, work and Philosophy of M.N. Roy, by Indian and Western scholars. Another dissertation on Roy, would, therefore seem to require some justification, more so in the context of the insistence of the Indian Council of Social Science Research that duplication in research should be avoided. However, the nature and subject-matter of literature on Roy leave ample scope for the present work.

The career of M.N. Roy evolved in three distinct stages. In the first phase, which lasted roughly till 1919, Roy made his debut on the Indian political scene, as a revolutionary extremist engaged in organizing and executing terroristic activities. It was during this period that Roy left the shores of India to procure arms and aid from diverse quarters for the Indian revolutionary movement, terminating his trends in Mexico. In the course of his odyssey he was introduced to the writings of Marx and his sojourn in Mexico marked his transformation from a nationalist terrorist to a Marxist.

The second phase, which spanned the years till 1940, began with the appearance of Roy on the international Marxist scene, ardently involved, ideologically and emotionally in the World Communist movement. He moved from Mexico to Moscow, where he achieved the position of sole advisor to the Communist Inter-

national (Comintern) on Indian affairs. He played a significant role in the Second Comintern Congress, especially in its deliberations on Imperialism and Nationalism in the colonial world, making a mark as a dissenter from Lenin's views on the nature and dynamics of the struggle of the colonial peoples. His career in the Comintern reached its height in the mid-twenties, when he was despatched to China as one of the advisors to the Kuomintang. The victory of the rightist forces in the K.M.T., obliged Roy to withdraw to Moscow, and thereafter, on account of major differences with Stalin, to Berlin. After his expulsion from the Comintern in 1928, he made his way to India, disillusioned with the nature the international Communist movement was acquiring, but with his faith in Marxism intact.

India in 1929 was in a state of political turmoil, with nationalist and progressive forces in ferment, especially on account of a new wave of repression by the British rulers, directed against the nascent Communist and workers' movements and the Indian National Congress. In the three years before his imprisonment in 1931, Roy built up a small group of dedicated followers (the 'Royists'), and made determined attempts to re<sup>u</sup>vitalize the working class movement. He also developed intimate contacts with young progressives in the Congress men like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose, and successfully endeavoured to persuade them to work for the induction of a strong socio-economic and ideological content in the Congress programme, and to mobilize workers' and peasants' movements within the Congress fold. His idea was to strengthen the .

Socialist element in the Congress, till then diffuse and dispersed in the personal orientations of individual congressmen. It can be safely asserted that the influence of Roy was considerable in the adoption by the Congress of socialist goals at the Karachi Session (1931), in the heightened attention it gave to the separate organisation of peasants' and workers' movements, and in the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P.).\*

After his release from prison in 1936, Roy plunged wholeheartedly in the National movement. Appreciating shrewdly the inchoate polarization between conservatives and progressives in the Congress leadership, Roy made many-sided attempts to sharpen the contradiction between the two streams, and to strengthen the latter by emphasising the importance of the role of the mass-base of the Congress, and by projecting the idea of the broader unity of leftist forces, within and outside the Congress. Roy was still by conviction a Marxist, though he had outgrown the doctrinairism of his earlier days, and had developed a thoroughly pragmatic approach, weighing the limitations and potentialities of the Congress in adopting a Socialist orientation. During this period we find Roy making consistent attempts to radicalize the National movement. The outbreak of the Second World war, however, occasioned serious differences between Roy and the Congress leadership, including the progressive elements, over questions of nationalist strategy, since

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\* During his imprisonment from 1931 to 1936, Roy maintained contact with his followers and friends in the Congress and outside it, giving his views and a constant stream of advice on programmes and tactics, for re-inforcing the emerging Socialist trends in the national movement.



Roy held from the beginning the view that the War was essentially anti-fascist, instead of anti-imperialist, and that the defeat of fascism would strengthen the cause of nationalism and democracy.

The year 1940 marked the beginning of the last phase of Roy's career. He disowned Marxism, and drifted away from the dominant stream of the National movement. But this dual alienation did not diminish his involvement in the idea of national emancipation and of the humanitarian ends of social organization, and he developed the philosophy and programme of Radical Humanism. The last phase thus marked his disillusionment with ideology as such and with the shape the political forces in India were acquiring, and is properly speaking a phase of withdrawal.

The first phase of Roy's career is politically and ideologically barren; besides many biographies of Roy are available, that have dwelt at length with his work during this period, including his autobiography. All recent studies on Roy have tended to concentrate on the third phase of his life and on the evolution and nature of Radical Humanism, to the extent that one is tempted to conclude that scholars have made a deliberate effort to highlight his critique of Marxism, and to undermine his role as a Marxist in the National movement. In other words, an attempt has been made to use Roy as a weapon in the anti-Marxist arsenal. What has emerged, as a result, is a distorted picture of Roy and his work.

Over the past two decades there has been a surfeit of literature on the Indian nationalist movement and on the evolution of Indian Socialism. The role of left-wing forces, such as the Communist Party of India (C.P.I.) and the C.S.P., and of collective movements, like the Trade Unions, the Kisan Sabhas, Youth and Students' organizations, etc., has been subjected to a fresh focus, especially in imparting a socio-economic and ideological orientation to the national movement and in developing Socialist forces in India. But, unfortunately, these scholarly works have made little or no reference to Roy, and most of them have dismissed Roy in a few lines or paragraphs. The substantial Volume XI (Struggle for Freedom) of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan's series on the History and Culture of the Indian People refers only occasionally to M.N. Roy. Almost all authorities on Socialism in India, including Prof. A. Appadorai, have given a major share of credit in the development of Socialist theory and practice in India to Jawaharlal Nehru, Jaiprakash Narain and Ram Manohar Lohia only.

In re-creating the history of the political and ideological movement in India, research has, thus, ignored and minimized the role of M.N. Roy, or has undermined it by a disproportionate emphasis on the last, and in some senses, negative phase of his career.\* One is almost forced to the conclusion, as a result of

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\* The overlooking of Roy by Communist historians is perhaps understandable, for to them he was a 'renegade', as is his distortion by anti-Communist scholars. But it is difficult to understand as to why a screen has been thrown over him by the votaries of objectivity.

this distorting selectivity, that of all the branches of knowledge, history is the most partisan, and that objectivity is rare in the writing of history, especially in the case of recent Indian history. To a certain extent, certain traits of Roy's personality contributed to his unpopularity among contemporaries and thereby tainted historical judgement. He was too independent in his views, had more than an ordinary element of egoism, and was seldom willing to compromise, as has been acknowledged by Louise Geissler, who was rather close to him. Besides, the stand he took during the Second World War was an important factor contributing to his isolation. But historical verdict cannot, and should not, be established by traits of personality or on the basis of stands taken during particular periods. In other words, to place the role of Roy in its proper perspective, the totality of his career has to be taken into account, and in his respected there is an over-riding need to examine especially the usually neglected part of his career, i.e., from 1920 to 1940. The justification offered for the present work is that it is aimed at highlighting the second phase of Roy's work.

The main theme that has been chosen is the contribution of M.N. Roy towards the emergence of radical forces in the Indian political movement and the radicalization of Indian Nationalism, by consistent endeavour to broaden the popular base of the movement and to inform its policies and programmes specific socio-economic and ideological objectives, with a view to making it at once more representative of the needs, aspirations, and spirit of the Indian people and more effective against Imperial rule. In view of the nature and objective of this

study, the historical method has been employed in dealing with the primary and secondary sources, in presenting the evidence and in drawing conclusions. This has involved an evolutionary study of the national movement and of Roy's ideas, and of the interaction between the two. It is hoped that the work would be able to present a balanced view of the theme and to contribute to some extent in the proper evaluation of the work and role of M.N. Roy.

The primary source material utilized for this study comprises, in the main, the extensive writings of Roy, especially those dealing with the specific problems and issues arising in the course of political developments, the reports of the deliberations of, and other documents issued by the Indian National Congress and its auxiliaries (the C.S.P. in particular), the C.P.I. and collective organizations like the Trade Unions, Kisan Sabhas, etc. In addition valuable assistance and insight have been gained from the memoirs and other writings of the contemporaries of Roy belonging to different political streams. The printed records and reports of the Government of India and its various agencies and departments have been extremely useful in the pursuit of this study. Old files of newspapers and periodicals have given valuable help not only in collecting relevant information, but in attempting a mental reconstruction of the contemporaneous atmosphere and determining the relative import of various issues and problems, as well. The primary sources have rendered immeasurable assistance and insight in the proper comprehension of the underlying themes in the deve-

lopment of radicalism in the Indian National Movement.

The secondary sources consulted were mainly instrumental in understanding the historical background of Indian nationalism and in appreciating the evolution of specific issues, problems and themes and of concepts, ideologies and policies, and in completing the picture that emerged from the primary sources. They also rendered great assistance in the form of presenting alternative interpretations to sequences of historical development and in making available the conclusions and derivations of research in related themes and topics. Of course, much of the secondary material had to be handled with care, since the subject as such is amenable to a variety of viewpoints, depending upon the outlook, background and even bias of the authors.

Most of the material was consulted at, and gathered from the Allahabad University Library, the Allahabad Public Library, the Library of the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, and the M.N. Roy Archives, Dehradun. Through the help of friends and associates access to references in the library of the Banaras Hindu University, the Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, the Lucknow University Library and the U.P. Secretariat Library was made possible. In addition, a wealth of material was kindly made available by Prof. A.D. Pant, Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, University of Allahabad, from his personal Library.

I am deeply grateful to Sri H.N. Misra, of the Department of Political Science, University of Allahabad, who, as my

supervisor for the dissertation, gave me valuable advice and assistance in the course of my study. The keen interest he took in the work, helped a great deal in its planning and execution. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Prof. A.D. Pant, for his many kindnesses, for the consistent inspiration he gave me in my endeavours and for the efforts he took to get for me access to valuable references. A special word of thanks is due to Shri B.B.L. Bhargava for the patient and dedicated care he took in preparing the type-script and in helping in putting the dissertation into physical shape.

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## CHAPTER I

### INDIAN RADICALISM : THE EARLY PHASE (TO 1919)

#### Western Radicalism - A Historical Overview<sup>1</sup>

The history of man is in past the history of human ideas. Ideas, it is now generally accepted, do not have an autonomous existence or an exclusive lineage, and are not the unallóyed products of man's mind, but have 'social origins'; that is, they are 'conditioned' by the socio-cultural environment of man. There exists, thus, a dynamic, or even a dialectical, relationship between the collectivity of ideas, characterized as 'thought', and societal structure; and qualitative changes in the latter are necessarily reflected in the former. As reality changes, so does our perception of it, and this in turn re-orientates the nature of our observations and pronouncements on social phenomena. Perception, however, itself being

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1. The following account is principally based on:  
Thomson, David-Bunpe since Napoleon, Penguin Books Harmondsworth, U.P. (1973).  
Moore Jr., Barrington - Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, Penguin Books (1969).  
Williams, Raymond - Culture and Society (?) Croce, Benedetto - History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century (Tr. by Henry Furst), Unwin University Books, London, 1965.  
Taylor, A.J.P. The Trouble Makers, Panther Books, London (1969).  
Barnes, Harry Elmer - An Intellectual and Cultural History of the Western World, Volumes II and II, Dover Publications Inc., New York (1965).

conditioned by subjective factors, like interests, aspirations, and needs, cannot have an absolute or transcendently quintessential form, and therefore human reflections on the human condition generate varying, and usually contending, matrices of ideas, that is ideologies. We are thus presented with different interpretations of social reality, contrasting explanations of its evolution, and contradictory visions of its normative goal.

Leaving aside disputations about cognition, signification, semantics and syntax, and controversies over macro-level conceptions like 'progress', 'evolution' and 'degeneracy' in the context of the development of history, as the proper subject-matter of philosophers, political theorists, and historians, one is confronted at the micro-level with difficulties arising out of changing meanings of words and concepts over a given period of time. The problem emerges partly from the fact that words and concepts are basic materials in constructing interpretive thought systems and are uniquely or differently identified and signified according to the premises, logic, and conclusions of system-builders or interpreters; a second contributory factor, one which lexicographers and philologists have to deal with most of the time, is that these cannot have absolute and immutable 'meaning', since words and concepts have relative ascriptions at different points of time. It is because of this that the history of the usage of terms often gives valuable insights into the process of historical evolution and change. These difficulties can be substantially



resolved if one proceeds after having clarified the meaning of words and concepts employed in the argument, that is after defining them and explaining the sense in which they are to be used.

The word 'radical' and the concept 'radicalism' are no exceptions to the general problems outlined above. Indeed they have had more than their share of controversy. They have been used variously from the beginning of the nineteenth century as appellations of contempt, ridicule, disdain and abuse on the one hand, and as honorifics signifying a broader vision of individual responsibility and commitment on the other. Besides their use has been in two distinct senses - as generic and general terms. Etymologically they are derived from the Latin word radix, meaning 'root'. The Oxford English Dictionary records the earliest use of 'radical' as an adjective in the sense of 'going to the root or origin; thorough; especially radical change cure' as having been made in 1651.<sup>2</sup> According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1965 edition): 'The word (radical) was first used in a political sense in England, and its introduction is generally ascribed to Charles James Fox, who in 1797 declared for a "radical reform" consisting of drastic expansion of the franchise to the point of universal manhood suffrage'.<sup>3</sup> The O.E.D. informs us that from 1802 the substantive 'radical' began to signify 'an advocate of "radical reform"; one who holds the most advanced views of political reform on

2. Vide, The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press (1959), Vol. II, p. 1648.

3. Encyclopaedia Britannica (1965 Edition); article on Radicalism.

democratic lines... .<sup>4</sup>

The advocacy of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and his followers, especially John Stuart Mill (1806-73), of thoroughgoing changes in the political system of England in order to subserve the 'greatest good of the greatest number', earned for the Utilitarians the name 'Philosophical Radicals'. However the gradual expansion of the scope of the movement in England for franchise reform to include demands related to the socio-economic set-up, especially in the period of acute economic distress (1815-30) following upon the Napoleonic Wars (the so-called period of 'peace without plenty'), gave to radicalism a dual meaning-generic and general. As a generic term 'radicalism' implied the specific demands relating to the extension of the franchise and the socio-economic alleviation of the poor, and the resort to the technique of militant mass action for highlighting and achieving them. In this sense, the exemplars of the British radical tradition were, upto the mid-nineteenth century, Charles James Fox (1749-1806), William Cobbett (1763-1835), Henry Hunt (1773-1835), Sir Francis Burdett (1770-1844), Francis Place (1771-1854), Thomas Attwood (1783-1856) and Feargus O'Connor (1794-1855). From this standpoint, 'Peterloo' was the consequence of radical activism, and the Chartist Movement, which resulted from the general disappointment of the socially and economically underprivileged with the First Reform Act (1832) and the general economic depression of the 1830's, was a species of radical agitation. (In the latter-

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4. Op. cit.

half of the nineteenth century, the major figures of this radical tradition were the 'advanced liberals' - Richard Lobden (1804-63), John Bright (1811-89) and Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914), the Fabians - Beatrice and Sidney Webb (1858-1943, 1859-1947) and George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950); and the Stalwarts of the Labour Party - James Keir Hardie (1856-1915), James Ramsay MacDonald (1866-1937) and David Lloyd George (1863-1945). These individuals questioned the basic social, economic and political framework of British society and called for a re-orientation of societal institutions. They however wanted the transformation to be gradual so that the basic stability of society was not upset, that is they desired change without dislocating the social order, and were opposed to violent and revolutionary techniques. Their programme was inherited and carried forward in the twentieth century by the Labour Party.

In France before 1848 the term radical designated a republican or supporter of universal manhood suffrage; the open advocacy of republicanism being technically illegal, republicans usually called themselves radicals. After 1869 a self-styled Radical faction led by Georges Clemenceau began to drift away from the moderate democratic republicanism of Leon Gambetta. These radicals regarded themselves as the true heirs of the French Revolutionary tradition.<sup>5</sup> They organized themselves as the French Radical Party in 1875. 'In 1881 at Montmartre they

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5. Encyclopaedia Britannica (1965 Edition) ; article on Radical.

adopted a platform calling for a wide range of social reforms... The Radical Party professed loyalty to the Principles of the French Revolution of 1789, especially to Jacobin ideals, and set great store by individualism, being dedicated to 'the systematic protection of group interests, particularly those of small tradesmen, small businesses, people with small private incomes and the lower ranks of the civil service.'<sup>7</sup> Much of its programme was basically negative : it was anti-clerical, and hostile 'to political authoritarianism and to economic collectivisation (whether through capitalist combines or socialist nationalization).'<sup>8</sup> At the turn of the century the Radical Socialist Party was formed in France, differing from the Radical Party not so much in ideology as in emphasis. The Radical parties represented the centre between the Right and the Socialists, and in the main were the governing parties of the Third Republic. Thus the generic signification of radicalism became indistinguishable from liberal-democracy and took on a meaning contrary to the implication of the general sense of radicalism. This was a carry-over from the early nineteenth century when the Restoration era regarded liberalism as an extreme doctrine.

The general signification of radicalism was a derivative by association of the general attitude and approach of the

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6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Palmer, A.W. ; A Dictionary of Modern History, 1789-1945." Penguin Books (1972), p. 267.

early nineteenth century English radicals. Without being conscious of it, they were articulating a political programme and adopting a political technique that were innately a critique of the institutional configuration of contemporary society and postulated goals that could be achieved only by broadening the base of the societal system or else by replacing it altogether by a different framework. It was only gradually realized by analysts and observers that the thrust of the radicals had ramifications much wider than the letter of their declared aims. Of course these radicals themselves disavowed, when they became aware of it, any intention of uprooting the 'system', confining themselves to the pursuit of political and socio-economic readjustments within the 'system', nevertheless, radicalism, in a general sense, remained associated with trans-systemic objectives and militant methods for their rapid realization. In what way did the early radicals contribute to this definition of radicalism?

The demand for the extension of the franchise was not simply a matter of endowing more individuals with the right to vote ; it implied the abandonment of restrictive criteria that established differential political functions and called for equality of political functions and political rights. This meant a fundamental alteration of the nature of political representation, which would naturally usher in a transformation of the character of Parliament and thereby of Government and the political system. The radical movement, by highlighting the exclusion from the political process of a large segment of the

population was in effect insinuating that British society was held together not by a consensus of the people on basic values but by constraint exercised by those in authority, and this raised doubts about the legitimacy of political authority as such. Their invocation of the ideal of justice as the justification of their programme, confronted the political elite with the disconcerting assertion that the vaunted British system was less than just. The resort to militant methods for pursuing their goals posed a challenge to complacent beliefs about political obligation. The recurrence of radical activism despite repression ('Peterloo'), statutory prohibitions (the 'Six Acts') and concessions (the 1832 Reform Act) seemed to suggest that the radicals were motivated by an alternative conception of legitimacy, contra-posed to the legitimacy of constituted authority. The radical programme was not merely political - it encompassed objectives of economic amelioration and social mobility. And, finally, the radicals had no patience with gradual and piecemeal fulfilment -- they desired immediate gratification.

However, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the hostile connotation of radicalism began to mellow, and it became a term of description not ascription. In general, the radicals began to be viewed as sincere, if misguided, idealists, as 'utopians', and radicalism was no longer considered a term of execration. At the most, sceptics considered them to be fatuous and cranks<sup>K</sup>ish individuals, theorizing on the basis of abstract hypotheses, building systems and programmes on

normative, instead of positive foundations. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the earlier doubts and apprehensions about radicals and radicalism appeared to have been replaced by the rather indulgent view that they were 'extremists', though of the impractical variety, representing a polar case of dissent. Disapproval and extreme antipathy was reserved for certain specific varieties of radicalism - the Marxists, the anarchists, etc., who, it was held, called for violent and destructive upheaval in society.

There were a number of distinct factors at work that contributed to the transformation of attitudes towards radicalism and the crystallisation of radicalism as a definitive concept. One such factor stemmed from the retrospective application of the term to historic individuals and movements. Were not the Protestant Revolution, John Calvin, the Puritans, Cromwell, Rousseau, et al, examples of radicalism? Was not Jacobinism, which was now examined with equanimity, a radical movement? The association of the epithets radical and radicalism with respectable figures and movements, made radicalism an acceptable and even respectable term. Then again, it was increasingly felt, the radicals of yester-year had been prophetically asserting ideas and projecting goals that were gradually being conceded or realized in the natural course. It became apparent that the radicalism of today could well be the accepted creed tomorrow. Further, the socio-economic consequences of the Industrial Revolution posed in an object and stark form of questions the radicals had been asking from the beginning of

the nineteenth century. The dimensions of these problems and the scale of unrest generated by them led to the realization that the chimeras and Shibboleths of the radicals were not mythic but real, and that the solutions offered by the radicals were not only prescient but inescapable as well.

The most important factor in this attitudinal metamorphosis was, however, the ideological and methodological efflorescence of radicalism itself. What the radicals had lacked most in formulating their programme was a consistent attitude towards and a coherent mode of analysis of social conditions. They had proceeded almost intuitively, impelled by humanistic and philanthropic concern for the under-privileged, and whatever theoretical approaches they developed, for identifying problems and proposing solutions, were at best partial and inchoate. The radical position and thrust became more comprehensive, sophisticated and effective with the development of Marxism. Marx's analysis of society, his account of social evolution and his critique of capitalism clarified the foundations of the social order, the nature of ideas and beliefs, and the extent of dehumanization resulting from the economic system. The premises and postulates of Marx and his analysis-system immeasurably strengthened the radical position, internally and externally. Marx (1818-83) himself was a radical par excellence, in the direct line of such radical ideologists as the Comte de Saint-Simon (1760-1858) and a contemporary of Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-81) and Louis Blanc (1811-82). Marx conceded the importance of the ideas of these individuals, but pointed out that



in comparison to his scientific approach, they were 'utopian' idealists. Marxism, its variants and its off-shoots, like Syndicalism, <sup>u</sup>Gild-Socialism, Anarchism, Democratic Socialism, etc., became the central domain of radical ideology and methodology.

### What is Radicalism ?

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, it becomes possible to attempt a definition of radicalism. Radicalism is pre-eminently a mode of perception, an alternative analytic and prescriptive approach, that goes beyond the generally accepted and dominant thought systems of the times. In examining institutions, ideologies and disciplines, it distinguishes between their internal foundations and external configurations, and relates the structure of the latter to the nature of the former. That the norms, values and attributes upheld by the external structure, attempt to imprint it as uniquely valuable on the collective consciousness thereby concealing the distortions and contradictions of the internal foundation, and impose a domain of 'legitimacy' to circumscribe the latitude of thought and action within the 'system' to perpetuate it, is the fundamental tenet of radicalism. Radicalism refuses to be intoxicated or indoctrinated by the value-systems of the structure, disregards the limitations of 'legitimacy', and goes to the foundations to estimate the worth of the institution, ideology or discipline in question. The ultimate measure of worth of any system is, according to radicalism the efficacy with which it promotes

the interests of man. In the field of political theory and practice, radicalism is the application of this perceptual mode to the societal order.

Radicalism views society as an organism created by man with the purpose of promoting the welfare of humanity, and poses the central question: Is the organisation of society in harmony with its ultimate goal? It believes that particular social structures propound systems of ideology and value that tend to obscure an inherent scale of disparities and the differential distribution of social benefits. The discriminative availability of social advantage is perpetuated by the idea of the stability of society, which prohibits actions that affect the established equilibrium of society, on the ground that it is based on the consensus of all. Radicalism, on the contrary, asserts that the social equation rests on the consensus of the privileged and the coercion of the deprived, and that society has to be forced along to a situation responsive to and representative of the totality of its constituents. It thus challenges the complacent theories and presumptions of the times that arise from a static perception of society as an end in itself, as endowed with innate mechanisms of progress towards the good of all and as justified and justifiable per se. The remedy, of course, lies in change -- not a gradual evolutionary change, but a rapid and comprehensive transformation, to be achieved through political action. Radicalism, thus, calls for social re-construction and regeneration instead of reorientation and readjustment.

Assuming that 'men are able to control their political environment by collective action',<sup>9</sup> radicalism prescribes a dynamic political activism that transcends the bounds of 'legitimacy', and is conditioned by an alternative conception of 'legitimacy' - any movement that aims at upsetting the social equation to achieve human dignity and freedom in a wider sense is its own justification. It adopts political techniques that are unorthodox and unconventional, and indeed go against existing conceptions of social ethics and social stability, but are efficacious in fulfilling its objective. 'Radicals believe in change. They realize that it is an essential part of all natural and social relationships. The only questions they raise about change relate to its speed and the direction which it takes.'<sup>10</sup> 'Radicals, young and old, have been outraged by tyranny and repression; scandalized by corruption, disgusted by indifference and inertia, incensed by misery, suffering and human degradation. Radicals have gone to the root in their search for causes. They have proposed changes in principle that, when put into practice, have transformed outlooks and revolutionized institutions. Propounding new principles and supporting reforms that shifted the balance of class power, they have incurred enmity by arousing and leading the oppressed in crusades aimed at ending old social practices and moving on to higher levels of well-being for larger segments of mankind.'<sup>11</sup>

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9. Encyclopaedia Britannica (1965 Edition), op. cit.

10. Vearing Scott - The Conscience of a Radical, Social Science Institute, Harborside (U.S.A.) (1965), p. 31.

11. Ibid., p. 171.

What Albert Camus (1913-60) has written about the 'meta-physical rebel' applies appropriately to the radical; " ... he categorically refuses to submit to conditions he considers intolerable ...";<sup>12</sup> "... he protests against the human condition in general ... . He attacks a shattered world to make it whole. He confronts the injustice at large in this world with his own principles of justice. Thus all he wants is to resolve this contradiction and establish a reign of justice ... ."<sup>13</sup> In other words, radicalism is inspired by a Promethean vision.<sup>14</sup> But a radical is no 'visionary' in the popular sense of the term. The goal he postulates for society is not an utopia based on abstract speculation, but a pragmatic and feasible objective derived empirically from the actuality of the human condition, and to be achieved by collective human endeavour with all its limitations. The radical does utilize certain theoretic formulations in his approach, in the form of a critical and comprehensive theory of society, or concepts and postulates about specific aspects of the societal order, but he does not circumscribe himself within dogmatic confines; indeed, he recognizes that, in the context of constant social evolution, doctrinalism has every chance of making him rigid and system-bound, and his approach static and self-defeating. His ideas and attitudes have to be oriented to the limits of the possible and the potential in every specific circumstances. This is borne out by the

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12. Camus, Albert - *The Rebel* (Tr. by Anthony Bower), Penguin Books (1962), p. 19.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

14. Prometheus, in classical Greek mythology, was one of the Titans, who stole fire from heaven to bestow it to mankind, and suffered the terrible vengeance of the God for his Philanthropy.

example of the greatest of the nineteenth century radicals - Marx. 'Marxism was never offered to the world as a static body of doctrine; Marx himself once confessed that he was no Marxist, and the constant evolution of doctrine in response to changing conditions in itself a canon of Marxism.'<sup>15</sup>

### The Radical Tradition in Indian Nationalism

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the articulation of a nationalist sentiment in India.<sup>16</sup> To be sure, the disparate masses of India, divided as they were by linguistic, provincial, social and even ethnic barriers, and subject to the partially exclusive spheres of British and Princely political authority, could not be characterised as a nation in the technical sense of the term at that stage of development, nevertheless, a complex of factors, most of them consequential to the establishment of administrative unity and internal stability under the British Imperium, gave rise to an amorphous, yet distinctive, body of common political aspirations - a type of national consciousness -- among articulate and potentially influential groups of people in the leading urban centres of British India. 'Producing a new kind of community orientation, this consciousness cut across traditional solidarities and

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15. Carr, E.H. - Studies in Revolution Grosset and Dunlap, New York, p. 36.

16. A competent analysis of the phenomenon is presented in Sudhir Chandra - Dependence and Disillusionment : Emergence of National Consciousness in later 19th Century India. Manas Publications, New Delhi, 1975.

loyalties even as it was influenced by them.<sup>17</sup> In the course of time, this was to crystallise in the form of a nationalist movement<sup>18</sup> which percolated extensively to the farthest reaches of British Empire in India, and over-spilt its bounds to evoke sympathetic strains in the Princely States comprehended in the system of British Paramountcy. In the nineteenth century the extension of the movement was mainly horizontal, since it received its motive force from the emergent 'middle classes',<sup>19</sup> but in the twentieth century it began to acquire a vertical mobility by enthusing the masses into varying degrees of participation. The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 is a landmark in the history of the national movement, for it became the focal point of the expression and execution of nationalism.<sup>20</sup> (From its inception, the Congress took on the form of an organization of nationalists, and was an eclectic

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17. Sudhir Chandra, op. cit., Preface.

18. There is a vast body of literature on the origins and development of the Indian National Movement. A select bibliography is provided in Majumdar, R.C. (General Editor), British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part I (The History and Culture of the Indian People, Volume IX). Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay (1970). An especially perceptive study is seal, Anil - The Emergence of Indian Nationalism; Competition and Collaboration in the later Nineteenth Century. Cambridge University Press, London (1968) See also, Desai, A.R. - Social Background of Indian Nationalism. Popular Book Depot, Bombay (1954); Ghose, Sankar - The Renaissance to Militant Nationalism in India, Allied Publishers, Calcutta (1969); and Majumdar, R.C., History of the Freedom Movement in India, Volumes I & II, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta (1963).

19. For the rise and development of the middle classes; an invaluable reference is Misra, B.B. - The Indian Middle Classes. Their growth in Modern Times, Oxford University Press, London (1961).

20. For the history and working of the Indian National Congress See Mehrotra, S.R., Emergence of the Indian National Congress and Sitaranayya, B. Pattabhi, The History of the Indian National Congress, Volume I, Congress Working Committee, Allahabad (1935).

political movement instead of a compact political party :- a character it continued to retain even after Independence. From the second decade of the twentieth century, despite its syncretic nature, it began to develop a broad political programme and a peculiar political technique, but in the first twenty-five years of its existence, it was, after an initial period of harmonious functioning, almost riven apart by major internal dissensions over political goals and methods. It must be kept in mind that the Congress was not as yet a mass organization; it had however been able to capture the imagination of a segment of the urban populace of British India wider than its formal membership rolls.<sup>20a</sup> The programme of the Congress did not have its mainstays at the popular base, but was formulated by its leaders. The essence of intra-organization differences was that the leadership was by the turn of the century gradually polarizing between what contemporaneity called 'moderation' and 'extremism', nomenclature that posterity continues to employ.

This dichotomy filtered vertically downwards, bewildering and dividing the loyalties of not only the rank and file of the organization but the phalanx of its sympathisers as well. The Moderates and Extremists were not factions in the conventional terminology of party organisations, but represented alternative, if not strictly antithetical, approaches to the objectives of

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20a. Vide Ghosh, P.C. - The Development of the Indian National Congress, 1892-1909. Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta (1960). Also see Seal, Anil - op. cit., pp. 277-9.

the Congress and to questions of appropriate policy and tactics.<sup>21</sup> Viewing the Congress as a party, it can be said, in general, that the Moderates represented the 'official establishment' of the Congress from its inception down almost to 1915, and the Extremists exemplified those who dissented from the Moderate position. The two terms were employed, of course in a mutually relative sense, but it would be erroneous to dismiss their differences as being merely of degree or emphasis only. Despite the similar social origins of their leaders and the existence of a vast 'middle ground' <sup>of</sup> political and economic views common to both, the political ideas and attitudes of the two were derived from different sources, and their political methods were responses to qualitatively different situations - political mobilization since the seed-time of Moderation had spiralled outwards from the 'centre' of British India (the metropolitan foci of commerce and administration) to the 'periphery' (the up-country and 'mofussil' towns and the territorial hinterland) and penetrated downwards from the upper to the lower middle classes, the Muslim community was engaging actively in articulating a separate political identity, and British policy towards the Congress had undergone a transformation from indul-

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21. A detailed exposition of the ideas and ideals of the Moderates and the Extremists cannot be attempted here, and reference shall only be made to their differences over specific and general issues, and to the Extremist critique of the Moderate Programme. For a systematic analysis of the political and philosophical ideas of individual exponents of the two schools, competent work of reference is Varma, Vishwanath Prasad -- Modern Indian Political Thought, Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Agra (1966).



gence to hostility on account of the alarm of the rulers at the gathering momentum of the movement.<sup>22</sup>

In general, it can safely be asserted that in the period of their antagonistic functioning within the Congress set-up, roughly from 1896 to 1907, the Moderates represented the conservative-minded wing and the Extremists the radical wing of the Congress. They should not be regarded as 'right' and 'left' branches respectively, in the current usage, for the leaders of both schools were, ideologically speaking, men of the 'right', nor indeed as 'stationary' and 'advanced' sections, for in many respects the Moderate standpoint was modern and the Extremist reactionary. Nevertheless, Extremism represents the first injection of radicalism, albeit in a special sense, in the Indian national movement, for not only did it broaden the base and the scope of the Congress, but also catalysed what has been called in modern Indian historiography the school of 'revolutionary terrorism', which however had foundations collateral with Extremism, and thus assisted in broadening the field of the national movement beyond the confines of the Congress. In order to identify the radical tradition of Indian

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22. For a general survey of Moderates and Extremists, and of the historical circumstances attending their origins, reference may be made to Majumdar, R.C. (General Editor) - British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part II (Volume X of The History and Culture of the Indian People), Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay (1970); Majumdar, R.C. (General Editor) - Struggle for Freedom (Volume XI of The History and Culture of the Indian People), Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay (1968), Majumdar, R.C., op. cit., Tripathi, Amal - The Extremist challenge. India between 1890 and 1910, Orient Longmans Ltd., New Delhi (1967); Ghose, Sankar, op. cit., and Dutt, R. Palme India Today, London (1980).

nationalism, it will, therefore, be necessary to review briefly the main features of the Moderate and Extremist programmes, and the revolutionary terrorist movement. To place the matter in its historical perspective, it must be pointed out that the cleavage between Moderation and Extremism in the Congress was heightened by the circumstances consequent and subsequent to the partition of Bengal in 1905. In 1907 a split took place in the Congress and the Extremists broke away from it and carried on their political activities outside the organization. In 1916 there was a reunion of the two groups and the Extremists again entered the Congress. By that time, however, the leadership of the Moderates was challenged from a new quarter, the political forces led by Gandhi, who had begun to emerge as an all-India figure. As Gandhi and his followers eclipsed almost all other political leaders, the influence of the Moderates began to decline and they broke away from the Congress and formed their own party. Although the leaders of the new party occasionally made important contributions to many of the political debates and negotiations which took place later, the Moderates ceased to be a major political force after 1918.<sup>23</sup>

The Moderate leaders were drawn from the urban, western-educated elite that developed in the major administrative and commercial centres of British India, and as such represented the intellectual advance-guard of the new middle-classes.<sup>24</sup> Inherent

23. Karunakaran, K.P., op. cit., p. 30.

24. Cf. Dutt, R. Palme, op. cit., p. 300: The Congress of those days was exclusively representative of the upper bourgeoisie and especially of its ideological representatives, the educated middle-class.

of the rationalist reformist tradition of Raja Ram Mohun Roy (1772-1833), they were under the deep influence of nineteenth century British liberalism and constitutionalism. In their political outlook they were loyalists of the 'Raj', accepting it as having constructive potential for the good of India : 'For them the main enemy was not British Rule as such, but the backwardness of the people, the lack of modern development of the country, the strength of the forces of obscurantism and ignorance, and the administrative shortcomings of the "bureaucratic" system responsible for the situation. In their fight against these evils they looked hopefully for the cooperation of the British rulers ... . Surendranath Banerjee, the "silver-tongued orator" of the older Congress leaders, proclaimed the ideal to "work with unwavering loyalty to the British connection - for the object was not the supersession of British rule in India, but the broadening of its basis, the liberalising of its spirit, the ennobling of its ~~basis, its character and~~ character and placing it on the unchangeable foundation of a nation's affection."<sup>25</sup>

It would be an over-simplification to consider them purveyors of narrow class-interests.<sup>26</sup> 'It should not',

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25. Dutt, R. Palme, op. cit., pp. 300-1

26. Cf. Seal, Anil, op. cit., p. 341 : 'The political arithmetic of India during the 1870s and 1880s, when the movement was taking shape, shows that it was not formed through the promptings of any class demand ...' Also, cf. Bipan Chandra. The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India. Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880-1905. People's Publishing House, New Delhi (1966), p. 752 ;

besides, 'be assumed ... that ... (they) were reactionary anti-national servants of alien rule. On the contrary, they represented at that time the most progressive force in Indian society ... . They carried on work for social reform, for enlightenment, for education and modernisation against all that was backward and obscurantist in India. They pressed the demand for technical and economic development.'<sup>27</sup> The main leaders of the Moderates were Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), Mahadeva Govind Ranade (1842-1901), Pherozeshah Mehta (1845-1915), Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1925) and Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915). Ranade defined the creed of the Moderates : 'Liberalism and moderation will be the watchwords of our association. The spirit of liberalism implies a freedom from race and creed prejudices and a steady devotion to all that seeks to do justice between man and man, giving to the rulers the loyalty due to the

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'As intellectuals some of them might and did represent different interests, classes or groups; at the same time, because they were intellectuals, their thinking was guided, at the level of consciousness by thought and not by interests ... . Their response at the level of economic ideas and policies, as well as at other levels, was that of ideologues and not that of an educated group concerned with its own narrow self-interest.' It is interesting to contrast these views with Karunakaran, K.P., op. cit., p. 54. Their economic demands, as their political demands, were based on the interests of the rising new social classes represented by the new middle class and the capitalists.

27. Dutt, R. Palme, op. cit., p. 301. For the economic ideas and demands of the moderates, reference may be made to Bipan Chandra, op. cit.

law that they are bound to administer, but securing at the same time to the people the equality which is their right under the law. Moderation implies the conditions of never vainly aspiring after the impossible or after too remote ideals, but striving each day to take the next step in the natural growth that lies nearest to our hands in a spirit of compromise and fairness.<sup>28</sup>

The demands of the Moderates, presented in the form of resolutions at annual Congress Sessions,<sup>29</sup> were originally very limited : expansion of legislative councils by induction of elected Indians, Indianization of public services and simultaneous competitive examinations in England and India for the Covenanted Services, improvement and regulation of the administration and administrative procedures, reduction of the burdens of taxation and curtailment of military and other unnecessary expenditures, check on the economic 'drain' from India, vigorous expansion of primary, technical and vocational education, amelioration of the peasantry, especially in the field of rural indebtedness, tariff protection for indigenous industries and revival of traditional handicrafts, betterment of the conditions of immigrant Indian labour in the British colonies, etc. The Congress programme was thus essentially for better and more broad-based, rather than self government. It deliberately avoided issues of social reform, since they could not be 'questions on which there is a practical unanimity between'<sup>30</sup> Congressmen.

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28. Quoted in Karunakaran, K.P., op. cit., p. 30.

29. A representative cross-section of Congress resolutions of the Moderate Phase (1885-1905) is provided in Philips, C.H., op. cit., pp. 151-6.

30. 'A.O. Hume on the Aims and Objects of Congress, 30 April 1885', quoted in Philips, C.H., op. cit., p. 141.

The methods adopted for pressing these demands were institutional : petitions, representations, and appeals to justice; violence, agitational techniques, 'passive resistance', etc., were explicitly eschewed. The forums employed for articulating and forwarding these demands were peaceful public meetings and the Press. The aim of this constitutional methodology was twofold : to 'rouse and educate' the Indian people and to impress upon the British rulers and British public opinion the justness of Congress claims and their duty to fulfil them in the best of British traditions. The Moderation of the Congress programme, in respect of goals and methods, was only in part due to the belief of the Moderates in liberalism and constitutionalism. The realization that British authority was too strongly entrenched to be successfully challenged, the organizational weaknesses and narrow base<sup>31</sup> of the Congress itself, and the awareness that the Congress ultimately represented a coalition of people who had a vast reservoir of disparate interests and was thus based on a fragile consensus, also dictated a limited and cautious approach.

However, despite the protestations of loyalty by the Congress, the moderation of its demands and the circumspect approach of its leaders, the Government did not respond favourably towards it. 'British imperialism understood very clearly - more clearly than ... (the Moderates) did themselves -

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31. Cf. Sri Pherozeshah Mehta, quoted in Desai, A.R., op. cit., p. 284; 'The Congress was, indeed, not the voice of the masses but it was the duty of their educated compatriots to interpret their grievances and offer suggestions for their redress.'

the significance of ... (their) progressive role, and the inevitable conflict that it would mean with the interests of imperialist rule and exploitation. Therefore from an early period the original patronage of the Congress turned to suspicion and hostility. Within three years of its foundation, the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, its original inspirer, was speaking with contempt for the "microscopic minority" represented by the Congress."<sup>32</sup> The British authorities did not demonstrate any intention to accede to the Moderate demands. The Indian Councils Act of 1892, which the Moderates had expected to embody their proposals, was the first serious disappointment to them ; it was 'a half-hearted measure which did not go even as far as the India Government desired.'<sup>33</sup> Thereafter began a series of disappointments ; not only were even the most innocuous recommendations of the Congress not implemented, but the bureaucracy embarked upon a deliberate policy of contempt, ridicule and obstruction of the Congress and its members. The elaborate Moderate programme, with all its trappings of loyalty, prayer and moderation, lay in a shambles ; 'Judged by the standards of success, the Moderates had put up a poor show, indeed.'<sup>34</sup> The Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon (1899-1905), the 'high noon of Empire', was the 'darkest hour' of the Moderates. Curzon never bothered to conceal his disdain for them, and in a determined fashion initiated policies and executed measures diametrically antagonistic to the major tenets of the Moderate

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32. Dutt, R. Palme, op. cit., p. 301.

33. Tripathi, Amala, op. cit., p. 47.

34. Ibid., p. 47.

manifesto. 'My own belief,' he declared, 'is that the Congress is tottering to its fall and one of my greatest ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise.'<sup>35</sup>

The disillusionment and frustration of the Moderates impelled them to forsake a part of their self-restraint in their approach to British rule. Their protests against British administrative procedures took on the form of a stringent criticism of the 'bureaucracy'. Gokhale, in his Presidential address to the 1905 session of the Congress referred to 'the worst features of the present system of bureaucratic rule - its utter contempt for public opinion, its arrogant pretensions to superior wisdom, its reckless disregard of the most cherished feelings of the people, the mockery of an appeal to its sense of justice, its cool preference of Service interests to those of the governed ...'.<sup>36</sup> The scope of the ultimate goal of the Congress was extended; in the same address Gokhale declared. 'The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interests of the Indians themselves, and that in course of time a form of Government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in the self-governing colonies of the British Empire.'<sup>37</sup> The transition from the ideal of better government to that of self-government was the Moderates' answer to the hostile apathy of the Imperial establishment. The shift in the Moderate stance was a reaction to the British attitude; it was also occasioned by the rise of Extremism in the Congress

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35. Quoted in Ibid., p. 54.

36. Quoted in Philips, C.H., op. cit., p.

37. Ibid., p. 158.



ranks. The Moderates realized the incipient challenge to their ascendancy in the Congress from this new political force, and attempted thus to meet the twin onslaught of the reaction of officialdom and the insurgence within its own fold. But their battle was a losing one from the outset. The rulers who had in the halcyon pre-congress days fondly and hopefully looked upon the westernized elite as its supplicants, had found a new clientele, which could serve as an effective counterpoise to the nationalism of the Congress; the dissentients of the Muslim community, who were then engaged for weighty reasons, in an enterprise of rallying their compatriots throughout British India into a political force. And the Extremists were not a 'superficial froth' on the placid waters of Indian political life - their fount was deeply embedded in the 'revivalist' tradition of the nineteenth century, which had outgrown its innocuous beginnings to take on a pervasive character.

What were the origins of Extremism? As 'an idea, at once religious and political, which gripped the mind of a generation of Indian leaders in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth,'<sup>38</sup> it had impressive ideological, sociological and political foundations. Its ideological forebears<sup>39</sup> were Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83),

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38. Tripathi, *Amalas*, op. cit., Preface, p. vii.

39. For a competent analysis of the ideological background of Extremism, reference may be made to Tripathi, *Amalas*, op. cit., Chapter One. Also, Varma, Vishwanath Prasad, op. cit., Chapters 1, 3 and 6, and Ghose, Sankar, op. cit., Chapter One.

the founder of the Arya Samaj, Bankimchandra Chatterji (1838-98), the first modern Bengali novelist, Vishnu Krishna Chip-loonkar (1850-88), the great Maharashtrian patriot, and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), the towering philosopher-humanist of the 'Indian Renaissance'. They postulated an idealistic vision of nationalism, instead of the mechanistic-political conception that the Moderates had derived from the West. To them nationalism was more an ethical-spiritual force than a political movement, springing out of the roots of indigenous tradition. They 're-discovered' and reinterpreted the heritage of India, and related the nationality of India to its cultural commonwealth. Whereas to the Moderates the central problem was 'the fusion into one national whole of all the different and, till recently, discordant elements that constitute the population of India,'<sup>40</sup> these visionaries never doubted the existence of an Indian nation. To them it was encapsulated in the cultural tradition of the land, and the main objective was to make it realize itself, through the collective striving of the nation. The Extremists, leaders, and followers both, were inspired by this ideal of nationhood, and the call it gave to the people to mobilize themselves for the risorgimento, which had as its goal complete national emancipation.

The sociological factors<sup>41</sup> responsible for extremism

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40. 'A.O. Hume on the Aims and Objects of Congress, 30 April, 1888', quoted in Philips, C.H., op. cit., p. 141.

41. No comprehensive analysis of the social mobilities and eddies of the late nineteenth century is separately available. For partial insights, reference may be made to Miers, B.B., op. cit., Moore Jr., Harrington, op. cit., Desai, A.R., op. cit., Seal, Anil, op. cit., Tripathi, Amal, op. cit. and Dutt, R. Palme, op. cit.

derived from the horizontal and vertical extension of social awareness in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century transformation had produced a 'lower' middle class as well, educated but economically at echelons lower than those occupied by the elite of the 'centre', comprising low-paid government and private employees and professionals, and small self-employed entrepreneurs, etc. They had no natural affinity or solidarity with the upper middle classes that formed the backbone of the moderates, and most of them retained social ties with their rural Kinsfolk. There was thus an element of social conservatism in them, and they had enthusiastically sympathised with or joined the Congress movement in the optimistic belief that it would usher in the millenium, especially in their economically marginal situation, aggravated by the economic fluctuations and currency crises of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The Moderate failure dampened the ardour of these sections towards the Congress, and in the form of a 'fundamentalist' retreat, they were naturally drawn towards the Extremist vision.<sup>42</sup> The success of

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42. Cf. Tripathi, *Annales*, op. cit., p. 145: 'The rank and file of the Extremists must have mainly come from the clerks, the teachers, the students, and the middle or lower middle class unemployed who could not fall back on land.' Also Dutt, R. Palme, op. cit., pp. 302-3: (The appeal of Extremism) reached to the discontented lower middle class and to the hearts of the literate youth, especially to the poorer students and the new growing army of unemployed or poorly paid intellectuals, whose situation was becoming increasingly desperate in the opening years of the twentieth century, as it became manifest that there was no avenue of advance or fulfilment for them under imperialist conditions, and who were little inclined to be patient with the slow and comfortable doctrines of gradual advance preached by the solidly established upper-class leaders.'

the Extremists in the urban and semi-urban areas outside the metropolitan axis of the Moderates can be attributed to this.

The political origins of Extremism are less complex ; it was mainly the outcome of the rigidity of the British establishment towards the Congress and the consequent erosion of the political credibility of Moderation. 'The failure of the reformist party to obtain reforms was the most potent argument against its raison d'être. The second generation of Congressmen questioned its moral right to lead and, in that process, the very assumptions on which it had so long led the movement.'<sup>43</sup> Not all questioned -- those empathetic to the Moderate creed naturally would not -- but a dissident minority which derived its inspiration from the indigenous exposition of nationalism. They stigmatised the Moderate approach as 'political mendicancy' contemptuously referring to it as the three P's (Pray, please and protest), and 'asserted that the political salvation of India lay not in supplication but in self-assertion, not in submission but in counteraction or direct action.'<sup>44</sup> Their confident call to the people to be self-reliant in the struggle for emancipation, and their faith in the efficacy of this appeal, contrasted pointedly with the reluctance of the Moderates to extend the scope of the movement, lest it 'produce a wider opposition, spreading the movement beyond its original bases and a deeper opposition driving it down to levels hitherto avoided.'<sup>45</sup> Curzon's retrogressive policies, in the teeth

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43. Tripathi, Amal, op. cit., p. 47.

44. Ghose, Sankar, op. cit., p. 230.

45. Seal, Anil, op. cit., p. 346.

of Congress opposition, culminating in the Partition of Bengal in 1905, added fuel to the fires of Extremism, and the anti-Partition agitation from 1905 to 1911 gave a great impetus to the Extremist cause. Yet other factors that contributed to the rise of Extremism were the momentum gained by the Congress movement since its establishment, the radical, rather than liberal, character of the nationalist Political Economy developed by the Moderates,<sup>46</sup> and the successful struggles of subject nations for self-assertion or of non-European peoples against Europeans on the international sphere.<sup>47</sup>

The major leaders of the Extremists were Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) and Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950). An important influence on this school was that of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) who 'though he was no extremist, also asked Indians to rely only on their own strength and not to hope for any sympathy from the foreign rulers.'<sup>48</sup> It is difficult to derive a consistent ideology of the Extremists for 'their political philosophy was not a consistent whole. It was never logically worked out as a systematic political thought. As a result, it varied from individual to individual and from one period to another. For instance Tilak and Lajpat Rai never conceived of Swaraj as complete independence from the British, as Ghosh and B.C. Pal did. They would have been satisfied with

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46. For the economic ideas of the Moderates, reference may be made to Bipin Chandra, op. cit.

47. Karunakaran, K.P., op. cit., pp. 65-7.

48. Ghose, Sankar, op. cit., p. 243.

a large measure of self-government. Passive resistance and boycott of everything British did not appear as important items in the programme of Tilak and Lajpat Rai. Such differences existed not only between the views of different Extremist leaders, but between the views held by one leader at different times. For instance, Tilak, at the end of his political career, showed greater signs of cooperation with the British administration than he did before that period, and Bipin Chandra Pal, the champion of complete independence during 1906-8 began to advocate India participating in an Imperial Federation later. Aurobindo Ghosh moved away from political radicalism and aggressive nationalism to the ideal of "Human Unity", in which 'cosmopolitanism' and 'world-union' were stressed.<sup>49</sup>

The supreme objective prescribed by them for the people of India was Swaraj or self-rule, not merely in the political sphere, but in the sense of national self-realization. They provided a novel conception of nationhood in the form of a cultural community and a spiritual ideal, and preached the doctrine of total dedication to the fulfilment of national emancipation. They did not approve of the technique of 'constitutional' agitation, and posited instead the method of passive resistance. The weapons of Swadeshi and boycott advocated and popularised by them, not only assisted in the development of indigenous economic enterprise but gave a strong economic content to political nationalism as well, besides

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49. Karunakaran, K.P., op. cit., p. 90.

germinating the idea of a 'national education' and of self-reliance. By drawing upon the traditions of the land, they instilled a feeling of self-confidence among the conscious and articulate sections of the people, thereby making political activity more effective in pressurizing the rulers to accede to nationalist demands. To instil political enthusiasm among the people, they skilfully employed religious and quasi-religious imageries, like 'Mother India', and religious motifs, like the Ganesh and Shivaji festivals and the Durga-puja, appealing thus to their emotions as most effective mainsprings for activism.

It cannot be denied that aspects of their ideologies were reactionary - the intermixture of religion with politics,<sup>50</sup> the reluctance to impart a social content to nationalism, the harkening back to antiquity, and the disinclination to build up organized mass movements, for instance, and it can be maintained that even if they did not create Muslim separatism, they at least hardened Muslim attitudes towards the national movement. But there is a definite radical orientation in their programme. Their political focus was not on the actual but on the potential, which imbued their movement with the dynamism

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50. Cf. Dutt, R. Palme, op. cit., p. 303: 'They sought to build the national movement, the most advanced movement in India, on the basis of the most antiquated religion and religious superstitions. From this era dates the disastrous combination of political radicalism and social reaction in India, which has had such a maleficent influence on the fortunes of the national movement, and whose traces are still far from overcome.'

born out of wider horizons. By enthusing the masses for political activity, they 'gave a democratic direction to the nationalist movement, both by bringing a large number of people into political action and also by trying to break the monopoly of the leadership of a few within the Congress party.'<sup>51</sup> As a group the Extremists did not espouse any collectivist philosophy as such. But many of their utterances indicated that they were less interested in defending the civil liberties of individual citizens than in fighting for the collective freedom of the nation. In the militant nature of the struggle they launched, the individual was often asked to sacrifice his interests for the nation. There was thus an implicit collectivist element in the political thinking of the Extremists.'<sup>52</sup> Deriving their approach from sundry sources -- ideological inspiration from the nineteenth century revivalists, political methodology from the European 'literature of revolt', critique of bureaucracy from the Moderates, economic ideas from the early economic nationalists -- they built-up a comprehensive indictment of the imperial regime, thus clarifying it as a 'system', and in their criticisms of the Moderates as working for supplementing instead of supplanting that system, they demonstrated a trans-systemic approach. Thus Extremism was, barring the reactionary element in its ideology, relative to the existing stage of development, a radical movement - but its radicalism was that of technique instead of content.

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51. Karunakaran, K.P., op. cit., p. 91.

52. Ibid., p. 93.



Extremism played an important role in the nationalist development of India. The revolutionary terrorist movement that came into prominence in Bengal and Maharashtra towards the end of the nineteenth century originated as a direct corollary to the extremist strain of nineteenth century revivalism, but it received a tremendous impetus from the development of Congress Extremism.<sup>53</sup> The terrorists soon extended their activities throughout British India, and kindred groups conducted revolutionary activity and propaganda from abroad, especially from the U.K., the U.S.A. and Germany. Some of the terrorist leaders developed a more comprehensive radicalism, drawing inspiration from Marxist and Anarchist sources instead of from mystic and religious doctrines. Though the terrorist movement ultimately could not make much headway, yet it fulfilled three important functions ; The Indian struggle received publicity outside the country, the Imperial establishment was forced to offer concessions to the nationalists side by side with its use of repressive tactics, and the terrorist themselves struck romanticist chords in the popular imagination, thereby activating a larger segment of society into political activity. The Home Rule Movement,<sup>54</sup> was a

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53. For revolutionary terrorism, reference may be made to Vol. XI of Bharatiya Vidyā Bhawan's History and Culture of the Indian People, op. cit.; Majumdar, R.C., op. cit.; Wasti, Syed Razi, Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement, 1905 to 1910, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1964); Das, M.N., India under Morley and Minto. Politics behind Revolution, Repression and Reforms, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London (1964); and Ghose, Sankar, op. cit.

54. For the Home Rule Movement, reference may be made to Vol. VI of the Bharatiya Vidyā Bhawan Series, op. cit., Majumdar, R.C., op. cit., and Ghose, Sankar, op. cit., Chapter Four.

direct offshoot of Extremism and was similarly an example of radical technique. The radical influence of Extremism was witnessed also among younger sections of the Muslim middle classes, and crystallised in the form of the Khilafat movement.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1947) was an eminent exemplar of the radical tradition of Extremism. He expanded the horizons of the democratic and collectivist tendencies of the Extremist Programme, developed its economic aspects, instilled into it a social content, and further sharpened the weapons of the Extremist arsenal - Swadeshi, boycott, passive resistance - by articulating them in a more comprehensive form. The Extremist technique was the definite fore-runner of Gandhi's methodology of non-violent non-cooperation, civil disobedience and Satyagraha. However, Gandhian ideology suffered from much the same type of ambiguities as the Extremist - the use of religio-mystic symbols, images and metaphors, and the absence of a coherent and comprehensive social, economic and political approach. Throughout the 1920s, the Indian national movement thus exemplified an inherent radicalism of technique. What was needed at this time was a new political or ideological current to instil into the Gandhian and Congress elements of methodological radicalism a radical ideology, and thus concretize a conceptual and programmatic radicalism, relevant to the problems and conditions of resurgent India. This function was discharged

by M.N. Roy, first by attempting an alternative radical movement, and then by working to radicalize the Congress from within.

## CHAPTER II

### M.N. Roy : Early Life and Career

Narendra Nath Bhattacharya, later to be known as Manabendra Nath Roy, was born of Brahmin parentage in the village of Arbatia, some twenty miles from Calcutta in the district of 24 Parganas. When he was about nine years old his parents moved to the nearby village of Kodalia, where he spent the remainder of his boyhood.<sup>1</sup> The exact date of Roy's birth is unknown - estimates range from 1886 to 1893. The late Ellen Roy, M.N. Roy's widow, although herself not certain, felt that the correct date was closer to the later.<sup>2</sup> Till Roy reached the age of fourteen nothing important is known about his life. But it appears from his 'Memoirs' that Bankim's 'Anand Math' inspired him to revolutionary zeal.<sup>3</sup>

Politically, the period in which Roy was brought up was an important period in the growth of national movement. The Indian

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1. This was stated by Nripendra Nath Chakravarty in an interview to Haithcox - Calcutta December 1962. Chakravarty knew Roy as a youth and was a member of the 'Jugantar'. See Communism & Nationalism in India - By Haithcox. Introduction. See also Samaner Roy's book 'The Restless Brahmin' - it deal with the early life of Roy in detail.

2. Ibid.

3. Memoirs, pp. 59 & 98.

National Congress had been founded in 1885, and towards the close of the 19th century the extremist group dissatisfied with the programme of the moderate group was fast emerging with a large following. The partition of Bengal in 1905, by the British Government was deeply resented by the people of Bengal, besides it gave impetus to the nationalist movement and strengthened the hands of the extremists.

The new movement adopted a programme of Swadeshi, boycott and national education. The beginning of the movement was rather peaceful but because of British Government's repressive action, passing of Sedition Act and the Press Act, the movement became sceptical about peaceful methods and resorted to clandestine activities coupled with sporadic terrorists measures.

Roy, after the partition of Bengal, at the age of fourteen, influenced by nationalist feelings and the revolutionary situation decided to join the revolutionary movement. Thus as a young teenager Roy was already participating in the nationalist anti British struggle as a member of terrorist, patriotic society in his native Bengal. In the sedition Committee report there are sufficient references about him.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the first period of the twentieth century, upto the first World War is a serious period of turmoil for Bengal. There were few people who were not influenced by this wave of excitement.<sup>5</sup> Roy was first arrested in 1907 charged with political dacoity which was committed at

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4. See : M.N. Roy and Radical Humanism, C.P. Bhattacharya, p. 1.

5. M.N. Roy, D.N. Sinha, pp. 10-11.

the railway station of Charingpota, 12 miles from Calcutta, but was released as the charge could not be proved. He was again arrested in 1911, first in connection with Howrah conspiracy case and secondly for the 'Garden Reach' dacoity case. He was however, acquitted in both the cases. It is evident from both the cases that Roy was during these years moulding his outlook towards revolution and adventure. In the following year a number of local groups which operated in the vicinity of Calcutta and had been loosely associated with the terrorist organization known as 'Juguntar', were organized into a more tightly knit party under the leadership Jatin Nath Mukerjee. Most of the local units of 'Anushilan', and other major secret societies in Bengal, also merged with Jatin's leadership.<sup>6</sup> Roy also became a member of the Jatin group. It is significant to note that in the early period of his life Roy was in very close contact with Jatin Mukerjee. Roy, considered Jatin Mukerjee as his 'Guru', Dada' and Commander-in-chief.<sup>7</sup> In his Memoirs Roy speaks very highly of Jatin Mukerjee. Roy has also admitted that Jatin Mukerjee was responsible for his political career.

With the coming of the War, the Jatin group along with other underground revolutionary organizations in Bengal (these groups had composed their differences for the attainment of common good independence) thought that revolution was inevitable and independence was within reach. Thus a general staff of the coming revolution was formed with Jatin Mukerjee as Commander-in-chief.<sup>8</sup>

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6. See ; Bengal - The Nationalist Movement, Leonard A Gordon, pp. 135-140.

7. Memoirs, pp. 35-36.

8. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

These revolutionary organizations sought German support. To secure funds so that they could contact the Germans, the Jatin group executed the Garden Reach and Belliaghata dacoities in January and February 1915. Roy was arrested in the former but was later acquitted. The Germans were interested in fomenting internal trouble in India as this would force the British to withdraw troops from the European front. Hence the Germans helped the exiled Indians to organize the 'Indian Independence Committee' in Berlin which was to smuggle arms in India. Dutch - India was closer as the suitable place to take the delivery of arms and money. Roy was sent to Java to arrange for receiving the promised arms and money. Roy returned with some money but could not smuggle the arms.<sup>9</sup> But Roy did not lose faith in German help and hatched another plan. So Roy left India for Java a second time in 1915 in search for arms, but again without success. Meanwhile, the British Intelligence soon learned of the conspiracy and in Roy's absence the Jugantar conspirators were arrested. On September 4, 'The New Emporium', a branch of Harry and Sons at Balasore was raided.<sup>10</sup> Soon afterwards Jatin was killed in an armed conflict with the police, which is generally known as 'the battle of Balasore'.<sup>11</sup> As a result of all this and because he himself was under indictment, Roy decided not to return to India in the immediate future and was away for 16 years.

From Java he went to Japan and then to China where he met the German ambassador and proposed a scheme for purchasing arms

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9. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

10. Haithcox, op. cit., Introduction.

11. Ibid.

and for the implementation of the scheme he demanded five million dollars. But the German ambassador pleaded his inability to advance any money. Roy was disgusted and he secured a visa to enter the United States. Disguised as an Indian Christian theological student, 'Father Martin', he arrived in San Francisco on June 15, 1916.<sup>12</sup> The West Coast was then a centre of revolutionary activity on behalf of Indian Independence; for instance, Har Dayal had organized an American branch of the Ghadr party, a Punjabi revolutionary society in San Francisco in 1913.<sup>13</sup> The party had the support of the prosperous Sikh community residing in California (The Sikhs were cotton growers). Besides the German Government was a more important source of funds which was always willing to encourage trouble in India. But Roy did not stay in San Francisco for long, he soon left for Stanford University, where there were many people, including Indian Students sympathetic to Indian Nationalism.<sup>14</sup> Dhan Gopal Mukerjee, a younger brother of one of Roy's friends was there to receive him. Besides in the intellectual circles at Stanford there was much sympathy for the Indian cause. It was here at the suggestion of Dhan Gopal Mukerjee that he changed his name to Manendra Nath Roy, mainly to avoid arrest. Here Roy also met Evelyn Trent, a young graduate student with radical views. They soon got married in New York. She was a great asset to him in his work until their separation in 1926, besides in his

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12. Memoirs, pp. 6-7.

13. Ibid., p. 90. See also - Communist Party of India, M.R. Masani, p. 272.

14. See : Communism in India - Overstreet & Marshall Windmiller, p. 21.



leaving towards Marxism she undoubtedly influenced him a lot. In New York he also came in contact with H.L. Gupta, Dr. Chandra Chakrabarty, Lala Lajpat Rai and many other Indians who were in league with the Germans. Besides he came in contact with American socialists and Anarchosyndicalists. They were naturally sympathetic to the cause of Indian Independence.<sup>15</sup> Roy in his 'Memoirs' admits that it was during this period that he began to read Marx in New York public library. It was here that Roy's transformation from a Bengali nationalist of the extreme school to an International Communist began. But his conversion to Marxism was far from complete. In fact his writing during the next two years do not show much Marxian influence.<sup>16</sup>

With America's joining the war, a large number of Indians who were either propagating the cause of Indian Nationalism, or were there to get money and arms from Germany started having a difficult time, they began to be suspected as German agents and a large number (98) were brought to trial in San Francisco in the famous Hindu Conspiracy Case. Roy and his wife were questioned by the police but were not held.<sup>17</sup> He was again indicted for violation of immigration laws. But he could not be brought to trial since he and his wife escaped to Mexico.<sup>18</sup> Mexico, as he himself admits in his Memoirs "was the land of my rebirth". Here he met a number of radical Americans e.g., Charles Francis

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Memoirs, pp. 79-80.

Phillips (alias Frank Seaman) Linn A.R., Gale, Michael Gold, Carleton Beals, Henry Glitten Kamp. With their help he began to write for Mexican papers. He soon mastered Spanish and published some pamphlets and a small booklet on India. In the book he charges the British Government. He for the disunity, illiteracy and backwardness of the Indian people. It is significant to note that we do not find traces of Marxian thought in the book, but in an Article written later entitled "Hunger and Revolution in India" (August 1919) some traces of socialist influence can be seen.

In Mexico Roy was completely out of touch with India, besides with the defeat of Germany which was certain, he could no longer hope for political or financial help from Germany. Therefore, Roy now thought of devoting himself to Revolutionary activities in Mexico itself. Roy took a keen and active interest in the formation of 'Mexican Socialist Party', and undertook much of its expenses. Although subsequently differences arose between him and Linn Gale. Gale and his followers left the socialist party and formed the first Communist Party of Mexico. From Gale's and Carleton Beals account it appears that Roy did not have much radical views till then.\*

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\* But as Gale and Roy were not in good terms his account of Roy cannot be said to be authentic.

The account is quoted in brief in Overstreet and Windmiller's 'Communism in India', pp. 24, 25, 26.

It was here that Roy met Michael Borodin, an agent of the Comintern. It was Michael Borodin who initiated him "in the intricacies of Hegelian dialectics as the key to Marxism."<sup>19</sup> Roy met him through Manuel Gomez, who was the editor of a socialist paper entitled "El Herald de Mexico". Roy and Borodin became close friends and Borodin latter shifted to Roy's house and stayed there for the remainder of his days. With Borodin Roy discussed communism and the philosophical aspects of Marxism. These few months with Borodin as Roy later wrote in his 'Memoirs' was the "most remarkable period of my life." It was at this time he later wrote 'the foundations of my subsequent intellectual development were laid.'<sup>20</sup> It was from now on that he became convinced that something was missing in the Indian National Movement and that the Indian question has to be seen from a different perspective.

From Carleton Beals account it appears<sup>21</sup> that Borodin told Roy that if he could found a Communist Party in Mexico, then he would get him named a delegate to the Second Comintern Congress to be held in Moscow, and that would give him a better opportunity to promote the cause of Indian independence.<sup>22</sup> With six members he formed a second socialist party who named Roy and Philippe as delegates to the Congress of Communist International.

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19. Ibid., p. 195.

20. See : "End of Mexican Sojourn" by M.N. Roy.

21. See : Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, op. cit., p. 26.

22. Ibid.

### The Second Comintern Congress

Much has been written on the Second Comintern Congress and the Lenin-Roy debate that took place there. Views have varied among scholars till date as to whom was correct then. All the same the fact remains that the Second Congress of the Comintern that took place from July 19th to August 10th, 1920, has an important place in the development of communist policy for the underdeveloped areas of the world.

It is essential, therefore, to deal in some length the Lenin-Roy debate that took place in this Second Congress of the Communist International. This debate is important firstly, because it is here in the Second Congress that Roy emerged as one of the leaders of the Communist International and made his mark in the Communist world, and secondly, it is in this period which begins with the Congress that Roy re-establishes his contacts with the National Movement in India and attempts to give it a radical orientation, and lastly this debate served as the basis for communist policies for the underdeveloped areas in subsequent years. Robert C. North and Venia J. Kudia have contended that "Roy ranks with Lenin and Mao Tse-tung in the development of fundamental communist policy for the underdeveloped areas of the globe."<sup>22a</sup> There may be a little exaggeration in the statement but it is beyond doubt that Roy played a highly significant role in the formulation and conduct of

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22a. See - 'Communism and Nationalism in India' by John Patrick Hatcher, p. 12.

Gomintern policy on national and colonial question in the 20's.

Lenin had in advance prepared a draft thesis on the national and colonial question and had circulated it among the delegates with a request for comments and criticism. Roy did not agree with Lenin and challenged Lenin's point of view. Roy in his 'Memoirs' states that Lenin was so impressed by his point of view that he asked him to draft an alternative thesis.<sup>23</sup> Roy thus wrote an alternative thesis, which differed fundamentally from Lenin's thesis.

Roy in his thesis presented an entirely different picture of the revolutionary potential of the Indian middle classes. However, both Lenin's, original draft and Roy's thesis were adopted and submitted to the National and Colonial Commission for consideration. The point at issue between Lenin and Roy is embodied in Paragraph XI of Lenin's preliminary draft :

XI : "In respect to more backward countries and nations with prevailing feudal or Patriarchal and Patriarchal - Peasant relations, it is necessary to bear in mind especially :

a) The necessity of all communist parties to render assistance to the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in such countries especially does this duty fall upon the workers of such countries upon which the backward nations are colonially or

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23. See : M.N. Roy's Memoirs - Part III - Chapter entitled "Disagreement with Lenin on Colonial question, pp. 377-378 and also Overstreet and Windmiller - 'Communism in India', p. 28.

financially dependent."<sup>24</sup> Roy did not agree with point, according to which the communist parties must assist any bourgeois-democratic <sup>liberation - movement</sup> in eastern countries. He believed that the Communist International should assist exclusively the institution and development of communist movement in India and the Communist party of India must devote itself exclusively to the organization of the broad popular masses for the struggle for the class interests of the latter.<sup>25</sup> In the end Lenin's thesis was accepted but it was slightly modified. It now read as follows;

Para XI modified : "With regard to those states and nationalities, where a backward, mainly feudal, patriarchal or patriarchal - agrarian regime prevails, the following must be born in mind. (1) All communist parties must give active support to the revolutionary movements of liberation, the form and support to be determined by the existing conditions, carried on by the party wherever there is such." The change is to be noted ~~in~~ only in the words 'bourgeois-democratic liberation movement', and the substitution of 'revolutionary movement of liberation'. The change of wordings was not much beneficial, its only advantage was that it closed the debate for the time being. As the latter congresses reveal that the contradictions between Roy's thesis and Lenin's point of view did remain and they led to conflicting interpretations in future. Neither Lenin nor Roy were convinced of each others' point of view.

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24. Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. 31, pp. 144-151.

25. Para XI original and modified in Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. 31, pp. 144-151.

In a debate during the Second Congress Lenin is recorded to have said ; "There is no doubt that every nationalist movement can be only a bourgeois-democratic movement."<sup>26</sup> Such a movement, according to Lenin was 'revolutionary' so far as it opposed imperialism and campaigned for a democratic republic -- 'the first of his revolutionary stages.'<sup>27</sup>

Roy was of the view that in dependent countries there were 'two distinct movements'. One was the "bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence under the bourgeois order", and the other was the "mass action of the poor and ignorant peasants and workers for their liberation from all sorts of exploitation". Roy was of the view that the former tries to control the latter. The Communist International should prevent this development. The Communist International should also organize or help in the organization of Communist Parties which in their turn will organize and mobilize the peasants and workers thereby paving the way to revolution and to the establishment of Soviet Republic.

In short, Roy was of the view that the Comintern policy of supporting the nationalist movements in colonial and semicolonial areas was inappropriate for India. Roy doubted the support of the national bourgeois, because he believed that in an advanced stage they would betray.<sup>28</sup> (Roy had the Leadership of the Indian National Congress in mind). Lenin on the other hand believed

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26. Ibid.

27. See also ; Documents of the History of CPI by G. Adhikari, pp. 178-185.

28. See ; Haithcox, 'Communism & Nationalism in India', p. 13.

that when anticolonial feeling was strong then at that time national bourgeois could be a progressive force, but Lenin also was convinced of Roy's assertion that a long time alliance with national bourgeois would be self defeating specially once its revolutionary potential had been exhausted. But even Lenin did not clarify certain questions that required elaborations. For instance what would be the sign that time was ripe for the communist party to break away from the nationalist movement and seek direct support from workers, peasants and petty bourgeois. This was never clearly formulated but it was clear that such a determination would require an assessment both of the relative strength of bourgeois and proletarian forces and of class composition of the nationalist movement within the country concerned. But so far as India was concerned so both Lenin and Roy disagreed.

Roy always suspected the leaders of the Indian National Congress. It is important to remember that Roy had left India in August 1915, therefore when he suspected the leadership of the Congress it was the leadership of 1914 and 1915 that he had in mind. The Congress then was an upper class debating society. In course of years the character of the Congress had been transformed.<sup>29</sup> The Indian National Congress now was a broad based,

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29. In 1918, the moderates were outnumbered by the Radicals. The dispute was over the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals for constitutional reform. In the following year Gandhiji launched his first All India Campaign against British Rule.

See : Haithcox, op. cit., p. 13-14.



militant nationalist organization. Besides this, Roy's attitude was also conditioned by his own analysis of the class forces in India then. There is little doubt that the ideological and the numerical strength of the Indian proletariat that he presented was greatly exaggerated.

~~Although~~, the first World War had increased the pace of industrialization and had created a sizeable labour force.<sup>30</sup> But Roy estimated that India possessed 5 million workers and 37, million landless peasants, he reported to the Comintern that although the Indian national movement rested for the most part on the middle classes, the down trodden Indian masses would shortly blaze their own revolutionary trails. In his supplementary thesis, he claimed that "the real strength of the liberation movement is no longer confined to the narrow circle of bourgeois-democratic nationalists." What Roy wanted to say was that in most of the colonies there already exist organized revolutionary parties. Lenin did not think on these lines, he considered the development of genuine class consciousness dependent upon party organization, discipline and indoctrination, and it should however be recalled that at the time of the Second Congress there was no Communist Party in India. Lenin was of the view that it would take some time before Indian workers and peasants could be effectively mobilized. Because Roy and Lenin differed in their assessment of the Indian situation therefore their attitude towards the Indian national movement was also

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30. M.R. Masani, "The Communist Party of India", p. 19 below.

different. As said earlier Roy was distrustful of their national bourgeois and thus Roy laid greater stress on developing independent parties in dependent areas <sup>rather</sup> than supporting existing national movements. Commenting on Roy's views then Haitheox rightly says ; "In his fervent faith in the class consciousness of the proletariat, Roy resembled Karl Marx before 1848, Marx had looked forward eagerly and with high opinion to the European revolution which finally erupted in 1848, but each one failed."<sup>31</sup> Marx was thus forced to revise his views concerning the degree to which class consciousness could arise spontaneously solely as a result of objective conditions. Marx then realized that longer apprenticeship for the proletariat is necessary. Haitheox thus is of the opinion that in 1920 Roy like Marx before 1948, underestimated the task of mobilizing class unrest and "forging an effective organizational weapon."

But it can be said in defence of Roy that Roy was eager to liberate the masses and once from all oppressive relationship whether domestic or foreign. So far as India was concerned, Roy believed that Revolution would come from below. His thinking so was based primarily on his assumption that India had already attained a stage of capitalist development in which class consciousness among the proletariat was beginning to solidify. This view point is further elaborated in his book 'India in Transition'

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31. Quoted in Haitheox's book - 'Communism and Nationalism in India' from Alfred G. Meyer's work "Marxism ; The Unity of Theory and Practice".

published in 1922. In this book Roy maintains that as a result of spectacular growth of Indian industry during the First World War, the national bourgeoisie was now demanding a much larger share in the exploitation of Indian natural and human resources.<sup>32</sup>

The Indian bourgeoisie, according to Roy shared the British fear of mass revolt, and though for a time they could use the strength of the masses to win still further concessions, they would eventually compromise with their rulers and settle for something less than complete independence.<sup>33</sup>

The book 'India in Transition' was written by Roy to convince Lenin of the correctness of his views. Therefore the book begins by rejecting the prevalent notion among the communists that India's economic and social structure was feudal. The important political factor in India is the rising bourgeoisie already well established. And because the bourgeoisie is being given little economic opportunities therefore it has begun a political struggle against British Imperialism. On the other hand, the gradually increasing impoverishment of the masses has aroused their political consciousness. To prevent the union between the bourgeoisie and masses the British have given economic and political concessions to the bourgeoisie, so that a nationalistic revolution be avoided. These concessions, economic and political have made the bourgeoisie vacillate. On

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32. M.N. Roy : "India in Transition", p. 29.

33. Ibid., pp. 30-31..

the one hand, the bourgeois wants to exploit the masses <sup>along</sup> with the British imperialists. On the other hand the bourgeoisie is also conscious of the fact that it can bargain with the British so far it is able to maintain its leadership with the masses (Therefore the bourgeois has to be revolutionary in outlook). But the bourgeois maintains Roy is also aware of the fact that the growing political awareness of the masses may in the long run threaten their own existence.

Therefore Roy concludes, that the National bourgeoisie cannot be trusted with any revolutionary role, it would sooner or later compromise with the imperialists.<sup>34</sup> "The Indian bourgeois is weak and unsteady in his purpose." But before the worker, as Roy says, there is nothing but struggle. He has 'nothing to loose but his chains'. "On him ultimately depends national freedom, but national freedom does not mean anything to him unless it bring his economic and social emancipation. The National liberation of India is but a prelude to a greater thing -- the social emancipation of the working class. National struggle and social struggle are going on side by side. The noisiness of the former cannot conceal the latter."<sup>35</sup>

In the book Roy relates the emergence of the Indian National Congress to the beginnings of indigenous capitalist

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34. See : 'India in Transition', p. 42 and also the Introduction to the book by Roy himself.

35. Quoted from the 1st chapter -- "The Growth of Bourgeoisie" and 3rd and 4th chapters entitled 'The Proletariat I and Proletariat II'. See - 'India in Transition'.

development. He refers to the moderates as the spokesmen of the Indian bourgeoisie, though he recognizes many of them as having advanced social views.

Looking back now, we could say that the most serious defect of the book was the underestimation of Gandhiji's political potential. He describes Gandhism as "The acutest and most desperate manifestation of the forces of reaction."<sup>36</sup> This work of Roy, was the first analysis of Indian scene from the Marxist point of view. It also demonstrates the Roy had mastered the Marxian method, besides, the book reflects his remarkable insight into Indian realities. Roy's thinking and ideas with respect to the revolutionary potential of the Indian proletariat altered considerably over the years. But this work was the first attempt to give concrete remedies to the ills in India then.

G.P. Parikh in the foreward of the book 'Indians in Transition' has rightly pointed out that "Indian Communism has not produced anything of comparable significance during the last fifty years."

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36. See ; Chapter 6th and 7th entitled 'Political Movement I & II', specially pp. 208 & 217.

It is important to note that Karl Marx's letter on India, written to the New York Herald Tribune in the middle of the 19th century were still to be put together and published. Roy was not familiar with it while writing the book. Although many conclusions are the same.

The nihilistic attitude of the 'Left-wing' Indian Communists towards the national movement of their country should have apparently made them completely immune to nationalistic prejudices. But Mr. M. Persits in a recent article says that in 'actual fact this was not so.' Nationalism was, "according to Persits, "one of the essential elements in the outlook of Indian Communists -- 'Nationalism dressed in ultra-revolutionary phraseology.' R.A. Ulyanovsky noticing this contradiction points out that the denial of revolutionary significance of the democratic national liberation movements by the communists, "was as a rule, combined with narrow minded nationalism."<sup>37</sup>

Roy was of the view that without the victory of revolutions in the Eastern countries, the communist movement in the West would be reduced to nought. This conclusion was based on the fact that the world capitalism drew its chief resources and income from the colonies mainly situated in Asia. Therefore, according to Roy, effort should be made to intensify the revolutionary movements in the East and accept the fact that future of the world Communism depended on the triumph of communism in the East. Mr. M. Persits calls Roy's theory 'one sided', bordering on Oriental fatalism, which gave a totally erroneous orientation to the Communist movement in the East and cut it off from real life. What Mr. Persits maintains is that Roy's efforts were

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37. See ; Soviet Review No. 27, June 13th, 1974. In the article entitled 'M.N. Roy's Supplementary Thesis and Problems of Anti imperialist unity', M. Persits underlines the contradictions in Roy's supplementary thesis, and defends Lenin's position.

really directed towards a splitting up of the anti-imperialist forces in the West and East and not towards their 'consolidation and rallying around Soviet Union'.<sup>38</sup> Roy wanted the Communist International to channelize all its energies on the development of a communist movement in the East, because he believed that the masses particularly the working class were indifferent to the national liberation struggle. Roy was of the view that organized socialist or communist parties already existed in the majority of the colonies.<sup>39</sup> According to Roy the only task of these parties consisted in organizing the broad masses to fight for their class interests. This meant directing the communists for an immediate and direct struggle for a socialist revolution. The commission however, deleted this portion from the final version.<sup>40</sup> Sardesai, has expressed his disapproval of the wordings of the ninth thesis of Roy. "I fail to understand," he has said, "how a communist party in a dependent country could assume the leadership of the liberation movement from its very start." Roy, he maintains, was wrong in thinking so. It was a task which required tremendous effort and patience.<sup>41</sup> As to the changes made by Lenin and the Commission we have already dealt. In short, Lenin wanted a unity of all anti-imperialist forces in the sphere of the national liberation movement.

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38. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

39. See : 8th Thesis of Roy, in MARXIST MISCELLANY, p. 28.

40. Ibid., p. 28. See also Soviet Review No. 27, June, 1972, p. 33.

41. Ibid., p. 33 and 9th Thesis in MARXIST MISCELLANY, p. 29.

Lenin pointed out that Communist parties could emerge as leaders of the revolutionary movement in the respective countries only after a persistent struggle. This required painstaking organizational work and revolutionary propaganda among the masses.

Roy perhaps was of the view that Asians were in a better position to understand the conditions of their respective countries and therefore, there was some resentment that Lenin should formulate policies and strategy for an area of which he had no first hand information. It is also true that Lenin regarded Asian revolution primarily as ancillary to the struggle in Europe. Roy and other Asians protested against this emphasis on Europe. To Roy this resembled the very imperialism that the Comintern was to fight (This position was however altered in future Congresses). Although Roy was a communist now, but so far his views regarding India were concerned he remained an Indian, having extremist views, as is shown by his earlier allegiance to terrorism. Further evidence of this point is found in his book written on India, in Mexico. In the book he says that "India will never be able to free herself from English rule by the good will of those same rulers, the only method is blood revolution, however desperate it appears in the present circumstances."<sup>42</sup>

The Roy - Lenin debate, marks the first attempt within the 'Congress' to formulate a policy which would successfully merge

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42. See ; Overstreet and Windmiller - 'Communism in India', p. 31.



the revolutionary aspirations of the nationalist anti colonialism and communist anti-capitalism. As to the disagreement over the degree of support to be given to nationalist leaders as opposed to indigenous communist parties, Haithcox has very rightly pointed out that this has continued to plague the International Communist Movement to the present day. The conflict even to-day, among communist countries as to the correct attitude to be adopted towards nationalist governments in developing countries (for example the Congress Government in our country) is itself a manifestation of this long standing controversy, which goes back to the early days to the Comintern.

Dr. G.M. Adhikari, while analysing the root cause of the present dispute between the Right CPI(<sup>Pro</sup>Moscow) and left CPI (pro Peking) goes back to the Second Comintern Congress and takes it as the starting point. The controversy has always been over the 'role of national bourgeoisie in our country, and in our national democratic revolution in its various phases.' The central problem, Dr. Adhikari maintains, "has always been (both before and after independence) how to unite with the national bourgeoisie, counteract its compromising tendency and at the same time build an independent Communist party."<sup>43</sup>

Roy's positive contribution to the Second Comintern Congress was that he drew attention to the compromising tendency in the bourgeois democratic liberation movement in the colonies and

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43. See : Haithcox 'Communism & Nationalism in India', pp. 17, 18 and 19. See also : G. Adhikari's article entitled 'Lenin on Roy's Supplementary Colonial Thesis in 'MARXIST MISRELLANY'

semi colonies, and in that connection raised the question as to how the Communist International and the Communists were to develop the revolutionary movement in those colonies. He also raised the question as to how the people of these countries were to avoid the capitalist stage in their march toward socialism and independence. Although the answer that Roy proposes in the original draft is an over simplification -- based on the same dichotomy of national and class movements, viz., sole concentration on the building of the communist party, and Workers' and Peasants' economic movement to the exclusion of any support to the national liberation movement. Lenin, however, cut these proportion from the supplementary thesis. It is also essential to point out here that Roy was not convinced of Lenin stand point and he continued to maintain his own stand point. His position later described as 'decolonialisation theory',<sup>44</sup> <sup>that</sup> British imperialism, afraid of the threat of revolution in the home country, would make far-reaching concessions to the Indian national bourgeoisie in the sphere of industrialization and autonomy of Indian administration, and Indian bourgeoisie afraid of the revolutionary movements of peasants and workers in India, would fall for the same, thus splitting away from the national liberation front. This line of thinking follows directly from his original draft.

Similar ideas can be found in book 'India in Transition' (already referred). The point is that Roy persisted in his

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44. See ; Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 102-103.

position throughout the twenties even though they were rejected by Lenin and the Second Congress.

Below are cited the original draft and the amended version of Roy's theses. Lenin's cuts and amendments are underlined and the consequential and editorial changes made by the colonial commission are in capital letters.

The original draft of Roy and the amended version are quoted in full from Dr. G. Adhikari's Documents of the History of the C.P.I., pp. 178-185.

#### ORIGINAL DRAFT

1. To determine the relation of the Communist International to the revolutionary movements in the countries dominated by capitalistic imperialism is one of the most important questions before the second congress of the Third International. The history of the world revolution has come to a period when a proper understanding of this relation is indispensable; the great European war and its results have shown clearly that the masses of the non-European subjected countries are inseparably connected with the proletarian movement in Europe, as a consequence of the centralised world capitalism.

2. THE FOUNTAINHEAD FROM WHICH EUROPEAN CAPITALISM DRAWS ITS MAIN STRENGTH IS NO LONGER TO BE FOUND IN THE INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES OF EUROPE, BUT IN THE COLONIAL POSSESSIONS AND DEPENDENCIES. Without the control of the extensive markets and vast fields of exploitation in the colonies, the capitalist powers of Europe cannot maintain their existence even for a short time. England,

the stronghold of imperialism, has been suffering from over-production since more than a century ago. But for the extensive colonial possessions acquired for SELLING her surplus products and as a source of raw materials for her ever growing industries, the capitalist structure of England would have crushed under its own weight long ago. By enslaving the hundreds of millions of inhabitants of Asia and Africa. English imperialism SUCCEEDED so far in keeping the British proletariat under the domination of the bourgeoisie.

3. Superprofit gained in the colonies is the mainstay of modern capitalism and so long as it is not deprived of this source of super-profit, it will not be easy for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist order. Thanks to the possibility of INTENSIVE and extensive exploitation of human labour and natural resources in the colonies, the capitalist nations of Europe are trying, not without success, to recuperate their present bankruptcy. By exploiting the masses in the colonies, European imperialism will be in a position to give concession after concession to the PROLETARIAT at home. It will not hesitate to go to the extent of sacrificing the entire surplus value in the home country so long as it continues in the position to gain its huge superprofits in the colonies.

4. WITHOUT THE BREAKING UP OF THE COLONIAL EMPIRE, THE OVERTHROW OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM IN EUROPE DOES NOT APPEAR POSSIBLE. Consequently, the Communist International must widen the sphere of its activities. It must establish relations with those revolutionary forces that are working for the overthrow of imperialism

in the countries subjected politically and economically.

5. Such relation of the Communist International with the revolutionary movement in the subject countries is not tantamount to the former's upholding the doctrine of nationalism. The Communist international is the concentrated will of the world revolutionary proletariat. Its mission is to organise the working class of the whole world for the overthrow of the capitalist order and the establishment of communism. The Third International is a fighting body WHICH HAS OUTGROWN THE REALM OF PURE DOCTRINAIRISM.

Dominated as it was by a group of politicians, permeated with bourgeois culture, the Second International failed to appreciate the importance of the colonial question. For them the world did not exist outside of Europe.

They could not see the necessity of coordinating the revolutionary movement in Europe with those in the non-European countries. Instead of giving moral and material help to the revolutionary movements in the colonies, the members of the Second International themselves became imperialists.

6. Foreign imperialism imposed on the eastern peoples prevented them from developing socially and economically side by side with their fellows in Europe and America. Owing to the imperialistic policy of preventing industrial development, of the colonies, a proletarian class in the strict sense of the TERM could not come into existence until recently. The indigenous

craft industries were destroyed to make room for the products of the contralised industries in the imperialistic countries; consequently a big majority of the population was driven to the land to produce foodgrains and raw materials for export to foreign lands. On the other hand, there followed a rapid concentration of land, THE PROPRIETARY RIGHT OF WHICH WAS VESTED IN THE STATE thus creating a huge landless peasantry. The great bulk of the population was kept in a state of illiteracy. As a result of THIS policy, the spirit of revolt latent in every subject people found its expression only through the small, educated middle class.

The foreign domination has obstructed the free development of the social forces -- therefore its overthrow is the first step towards the revolution in the colonies. So, to help overthrow the foreign rule in the colonies is not to endorse the nationalist aspirations of the native bourgeoisie but to open up the way to the smothered proletariat there.

7. The revolutionary movements in the colonies are essentially an economic struggle. The bourgeois democratic nationalist movements are limited to the small middle class which does not reflect the aspirations of the masses. Without the active support of the masses, the national freedom of the colonies will never be attained. But in many countries, especially in India, the masses are not with the bourgeois nationalist leaders -- they are moving towards revolution independently of the bourgeois nationalist movement. There are to be found in the dependent countries two

distinct movements which every day grow FARTHER AND FARTHER apart from each other. One is the bourgeois democratic nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence and the other is the mass action of the ignorant and poor peasants and workers. The former endeavour to control the latter and often succeed to a certain extent, but it would be a mistake to assume that the bourgeois nationalist movement expresses the sentiments and aspirations of the general population. For the overthrow of foreign IMPERIALISM, the first step towards revolution in the colonies, the co-operation of the bourgeois nationalist elements MAY BE useful.

But the Communist International must not find in them the media through which the revolutionary movement in the colonies should be helped. The mass movements in the colonies are growing independently of the nationalist movements. The masses distrust the political leaders who always lead them astray and prevent them from revolutionary action.

8. The real strength of the liberation movement in the colonies is no longer confined to the narrow circle of bourgeois democratic nationalists. In most of the colonies there already exist organised SOCIALIST OR COMMUNIST PARTIES, IN CLOSE RELATION TO THE MASS MOVEMENT. The relation of the Communist International with the revolutionary movement in the colonies should be through the medium of these parties or groups, because they ARE the vanguard of the working class in their respective countries. They MAY not be very big today, but they reflect the DESIRE of

the masses and the MASSES will follow them to the revolution. The communist parties of the different imperialistic countries must work in conjunction with these proletarian parties of the colonies and through them, give all the moral and material support to the revolutionary movements in general.

9. The supposition that, owing to the economic and industrial backwardness, the peoples in the colonies are bound to go through the stage of bourgeois democracy is wrong. The events and conditions in many of the colonies do not corroborate such a supposition. It is true that the revolution in the colonies is not going to be a communist revolution in its first stages. But if from the BEGINNING, THE LEAD OF THE REVOLUTION is in the hands of a communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses WOULD not be led astray but WOULD go straight ahead through the successive periods of development of revolutionary experience. Indeed, it would be very difficult in many of the oriental countries to solve the agrarian problem along pure communist principles. In its first stages, the revolution in the colonies must be carried on with a programme IN which will BE INCLUDED many petty bourgeois reforms clauses -- FOR INSTANCE, division of land, etc. But from this it does not necessarily follow that the leadership of the revolution will have to be surrendered to the bourgeois democrats.

10. The bourgeois national democrats in the colonies strive for the establishment of a free national state, whereas the masses of workers and poor peasants are revolting even though in many cases unconsciously, against the system which permits such brutal



exploitation. Consequently, in the colonies, we have two contradictory forces; they cannot develop together. To support the colonial bourgeois democratic movements would amount to helping the growth of the national spirit which will surely obstruct the awakening of class consciousness in the masses; whereas to encourage and support the revolutionary mass action through the medium of a communist party of the proletarians will bring the real revolutionary forces to action which will not only overthrow the foreign imperialism, but lead progressively to the development of Soviet power, thus preventing the rise of a native capitalism in place of the vanquished foreign capitalism, to further oppress and exploit the people.

11. To initiate at as early a stage as possible the class struggle in the colonies means to awaken the people to the danger of a transplanted European capitalism which, overthrown in Europe, may seek refuge in Asia, and to defeat such an eventuality before its beginning.

#### AMENDED THESES

1. To determine MORE ESPECIALLY the relation of CI to the revolutionary movements in the countries dominated by capitalistic imperialism, FOR INSTANCE CHINA AND INDIA, is one of the most important questions before the second congress of the Third International. The history of the world revolution has come to a period when a proper understanding of this relation is indispensable. The great European war and its result have shown clearly that the masses of non-European subjected countries are

inseparably connected with the proletarian movement in Europe, as a consequence of the CENTRALISATION of world capitalism for INSTANCE THE SENDING OF COLONIAL TROOPS AND HUGE ARMIES OF WORKERS TO THE BATTLEFRONT DURING THE WAR, ETC.

2. ONE OF THE MAIN SOURCES FROM WHICH EUROPEAN CAPITALISM DRAWS ITS CHIEF STRENGTH IS TO BE FOUND IN THE COLONIAL POSSESSIONS AND DEPENDENCIES. Without the control of the extensive markets and vast fields of exploitation in the colonies, the capitalist powers of Europe cannot maintain their existence even for a short time. England, the stronghold of imperialism, has been suffering from overproduction since more than a century ago. But for the extensive colonial possessions acquired for THE SALE OF her surplus products and as a source of raw materials for her ever growing industries, the capitalistic structure of England would have been crushed under its own weight long ago. By enslaving the hundreds of millions of inhabitants of Asia and Africa, English imperialism SUCCEEDS so far in keeping the British proletariat under the domination of the bourgeoisie.

3. Superprofit gained in the colonies is the mainstay of the modern capitalism -- and so long as the latter is not deprived of this source of superprofit, it will not be easy for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist order. Thanks to the possibility of the extensive exploitation of human labour and natural resources in the colonies, the capitalist nations of Europe are trying, not without success, to recuperate their present bankruptcy. By exploiting the masses in the colonies,

European imperialism will be in a position to give concession after concession to the LABOUR ARISTOCRACY at home. WHILST ON THE ONE HAND, EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM SEEKS TO LOWER THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE HOME PROLETARIAT BY BRINGING INTO COMPETITION THE PRODUCTIONS OF THE LOWER PAID WORKERS IN SUBJECT COUNTRIES, ON THE OTHER HAND, it will not hesitate to go to the extent of sacrificing the entire surplus value in the home country so long as it continues to gain its huge superprofits in the colonies.

4. THE BREAKING UP OF THE COLONIAL EMPIRE, TOGETHER WITH THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IN THE HOME COUNTRY, WILL OVERTHROW THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM IN EUROPE. Consequently, the Communist International must widen the sphere of its activities. It must establish relations with those revolutionary forces that are working for the overthrow of imperialism in the countries subjected politically and economically. THESE TWO FORCES MUST BE COORDINATED IF THE FINAL SUCCESS OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION IS TO BE GUARANTEED.

5. The CI is the concentrated will of the world revolutionary proletariat. Its mission is to organise the working class of the whole world for the overthrow of the capitalistic order and the establishment of communism. The Third International is a fighting body WHICH MUST ASSUME THE TASK OF COMBINING THE REVOLUTIONARY FORCES OF ALL THE COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD. Dominated as it was by a group of politicians, permeated with bourgeois culture, the Second International failed to appreciate the importance of the colonial question. For them the world did not

exist outside of Europe. They could not see the necessity of co-ordinating the revolutionary movement OF Europe with those in the non-European countries. Instead of giving moral and material help to the revolutionary movement in the colonies, the members of the Second International themselves became imperialists.

6. Foreign imperialism, imposed on the eastern peoples, prevented them from developing socially and economically side by side with their fellows in Europe and America. Owing to the imperialist policy of preventing industrial development IN the colonies, a proletarian class, in the strict sense of the WORD could not come into existence HERE until recently. The indigenous craft industries were destroyed to make room for the products of the centralised industries in the imperialistic countries -- consequently a majority of the population was driven to the land to produce foodgrains and raw materials for export to foreign lands. On the other hand, there followed a rapid concentration of land IN THE HANDS OF THE BIG LANDOWNERS, OF FINANCIAL CAPITALISTS AND THE STATE, thus creating a huge landless peasantry. The great bulk of the population was kept in a state of illiteracy. As a result of ITS policy, the spirit of revolt latent in every subject people found its expression only through the small, educated middle class.

Foreign domination has obstructed the free development of the social forces, therefore its overthrow is the first step towards a revolution in the colonies. So to help overthrow the

foreign rule in the colonies is not to endorse the nationalist aspirations of the native bourgeoisie, but to open the way to the smothered proletariat there.

7. There are to be found in the dependent countries two distinct movements which every day grow FURTHER apart from each other. One is the bourgeois democratic nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence UNDER THE BOURGEOIS ORDER, and the other is the mass action of the poor and ignorant peasants and workers FOR THEIR LIBERATION FROM ALL SORTS OF EXPLOITATION. The former endeavour to control the latter, and often succeed to a certain extent, BUT THE CP AND THE PARTIES AFFECTED MUST STRUGGLE AGAINST SUCH CONTROL AND HELP TO DEVELOP CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE WORKING MASSES OF THE COLONIES. For the overthrow of foreign CAPITALISM WHICH IS the first step toward revolution in the colonies the cooperation of the bourgeois nationalist revolutionary elements IS useful.

BUT THE FOREMOST AND NECESSARY TASK IS THE FORMATION OF COMMUNIST PARTIES WHICH WILL ORGANISE THE PEASANTS AND WORKERS AND LEAD THEM TO THE REVOLUTION AND TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET REPUBLICS. THUS THE MASSES IN THE BACKWARD COUNTRIES MAY REACH COMMUNISM? NOT THROUGH CAPITALISTIC DEVELOPMENT, BUT LED BY THE CLASS CONSCIOUS PROLETARIAT OF THE ADVANCED CAPITALIST COUNTRIES.

8. The real strength of the liberation movements in the colonies is no longer confined to the narrow circle of bourgeois democratic nationalists. In most of the colonies there already

exist organised REVOLUTIONARY PARTIES WHICH STRIVE TO BE IN CLOSE CONNECTION WITH THE WORKING MASSES. The relation of CI with the revolutionary movement in the colonies should be REALISED through the medium of these parties or groups, because they WERE the vanguard of the working class in their respective countries. They ARE not very LARGE today, but they reflect the ASPIRATIONS of the masses and the LATTER will follow them to the revolution. The communist parties of the different imperialistic countries must work in conjunction with these proletarian parties of the colonies and, through them, give all moral and material support to the revolutionary movement in general.

9. The revolution in the colonies is not going to be a communist revolution in its first stage. But if from the OUTSET THE LEADERSHIP is in the hands of a communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses WILL not be led astray, but MAY go ahead through the successive period of development of revolutionary experience. Indeed, it would be extremely erroneous in many of the oriental countries to try to solve the agrarian problem according to pure communist principles. In its first stages, the revolution in the colonies must be carried on with a programme which will include many petty bourgeois reform clauses, SUCH AS division of land, etc. But from this it does not follow at all that the leadership of the revolution will have to be surrendered to the bourgeois democrats. ON THE CONTRARY, THE PROLETARIAN PARTIES MUST CARRY ON VIGOROUS AND SYSTEMATIC PROPAGANDA OF THE SOVIET IDEA AND ORGANISE THE PEASANTS' AND

WORKERS' SOVIETS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THESE SOVIETS WILL WORK IN COOPERATION WITH THE SOVIET REPUBLICS IN THE ADVANCED CAPITALISTIC COUNTRIES FOR THE ULTIMATE OVERTHROW OF THE CAPITALIST ORDER THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE YEARS OF REVOLUTIONARY RADICALISM

Roy's main work during the first few years of his association with the Communist International was the development of the revolutionary movement in India. The theoretical basis for this work was laid down by Lenin's thesis on the national and colonial question, which we have just dealt, improved and augmented as they were by Roy's supplementary thesis. Roy in the 20's attempted to develop the revolutionary movement in India both through the Indian National Congress and through independent organizations of workers and peasants and intellectuals. He established contacts with the leaders of national movement as well as with the younger intellectuals who were getting dissatisfied and disillusioned with Gandhiji and his programme of work and his non-violent methods. With this end in view he began the publication of a journal called the 'Vanguard', it was later changed to 'Advance Guard' and still later into 'Masses'.<sup>1</sup> The journal had to change its name as well as its place of publication and Roy had to change his residence because of steps taken against him by the

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1. The Vanguard of Indian Independence began publication in 1922, in January 1925 it became 'Masses of India'. The journal was discontinued in 1928. See Overstreet and Windmiller - 'Commission in India', p. 448.



Police. In the course of those 4-5 years Roy was expelled from Germany, Switzerland and France. During this period besides writing innumerable letters, statements and manifestos he wrote 3 books on the then Indian political situation. They were ; 'One Year of Non-Cooperation', 'Aftermath of Non-Cooperation' and 'The Future of Indian Politics'. These writings of Roy were instrumental in giving Indian intellectuals an introduction to communism and Marxism and they placed before them a concrete programme of socio-economic revolution. These writings did exercise a lasting effect on the thinking of a large number of young men of that time.

As a result of Roy's efforts (as we shall see later) Communist groups developed in early twenties in a number of places like Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, Lahore and Madras. Efforts were also made to bring them together into a well built organization; "M.N. Roy, the first of the Indian Communist leaders, was well chosen by Moscow to introduce Communism in India. He used the skills of a conspirator to communicate the new doctrine to selected young men in India and to inspire them to try a new experiment in organizing calmly, deliberately, systematically but ruthlessly a revolution. The second of the 'Meerut Conspiracy Case', provides testimony that Roy had raised a band of devoted Communists in India, who had begun to establish their influence over the working classes and had given evidence of their capacity to arouse the militant spirit." This quotation from the history of Indian Communist Party compelled by the Central Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India, clearly shows that Roy was

the main factor responsible for the spectacular growth of Communism during the period. Besides, through the 'Khilafat Movement', 'Bengal Revolutionary Societies' and the 'Trade Unions', Roy made a collective effort to radicalize the entire national movement as such. This is not to suggest that no earlier attempts at radicalizing the national movement had been made. The extremists had already (before Roy) propagated the idea which had led to the split in the Indian National Congress. (At the Annual Congress session at Surat in 1907, the extremists felt that extraconstitutional methods were required to secure relief from repressive methods of British Government. The two groups nearly came to blows; but the moderates, however, were able to assert their control over the party. But by 1918, the moderates were outnumbered and they left the Congress party in a dispute with the radicals over the Montague-Chelmsford proposals for constitutional reforms to form the liberal party. But these radicals whose leader was Tilak, can at best be called rivalalist radicals. These radicals sought inspiration from the Indian tradition, right from the ancient times. The discovery of the Indian heritage by the efforts of oriental scholars, encouraged them to develop their ideals and ideas on the basis of Indian thought. Therefore, the <sup>ev</sup>rivalist radicals, tended to seek all the sources for the transformation of Indian society in the Indian culture, Philosophic and historic tradition, consequently the rivalist radicals gave an important place to religion, both as a motivating force and as a source of fulfilment. Ideologically speaking these <sup>ev</sup>rivalalist radicals were

conservative. The transformation they sought was merely political i.e., ending of foreign domination. As for the socio-economic complexion of society their programme was one of reverting to the traditional Indian economic pattern with emphasis on self sufficient village economy and a suspicion of industrialization, though not direct opposition to industrialization. On the part of the state they favoured a laissez-faire approach in the field of social organization and reform.

The point is, that M.N. Roy was the first significant effort to radicalize the national movement through the ideology and programme of socialism. Throughout the succeeding period of our national struggle socialist ideas gradually gained ground, exemplified on the one extreme by the rise and growth of the Communist Party of India, workers and peasants parties and the trade unions, on the other hand by the growth of the left wing within the Congress Party and later the Congress socialist party, which received direct encouragement from J.L. Nehru and Narendra Deo etc. We shall examine and evaluate as to how far Roy was able to radicalize the 'National Movement' as such in the 20's through various bodies such as the Khilafat Movement, Revolutionary Societies in Bengal and the Labour Movement.

Towards the end of 1920, an emigre Communist Party was organized in India. The party was formed from among 'Indian muhajireen' (Muslim pilgrims) who had participated in a Hijarat, from India against the dismemberment of Turkey (Turkey was dismembered by the Allies after the 1st World War). The harsh terms

of the treaty imposed on Turkey were interpreted by many Muslims as a threat to Islam itself. Therefore in 1920, thousand of Muslims left India to join Mustafá Kamal Pasha's rebel army in Turkey. The Soviet authorities had informed these Muslims that they would be given facilities to proceed to Turkey.<sup>2</sup>

In summer of 1920, about 80 or 90 Muhajiruns were captured by the Turks who were in revolt against Bolshevik rule. They were however rescued by Russian troops and were given the option of continuing their journey to Turkey or going to Tashkent for military training. About half the group came to Tashkent, where in September 1920, they were received by M.N. Roy.

Roy had been sent to Tashkent (as a member of the Central Asiatic Bureau of the Comintern) for directing revolutionary activity in Asia. He was also to provide military and financial assistance to the turbulent frontier tribes in order to foment rebellion along the Indian borders with Afghanistan, and to raise from the deserters of the Indian army a 'liberation army', which would use the frontier area as a base of operations. He was supplied with 27 wagons carrying arms, ammunitions and military stores, two wagons of gold coin, bullion, pound and rupee notes, ten wagons of dismantled air planes, and the staff of a military training school.<sup>3</sup>

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2. See ; Overstreet and Windmiller 'Communism in India', pp. 34-35.

Also see ; M.N. Roy's 'Memoirs', pp. 419 to 426.

3. Ibid.

On hearing of the arrival of the Muhajirun, Roy thought he might recruit some of them for the proposed liberation army. For this purpose, Roy invited to Tashkent a group of about 50 who had been rescued near Kirkee, later they were joined by another small group of Muslims. Most of these men were poorly educated Moslems but some did respond to the political indoctrination given by Roy. Roy now sought permission of the Central Asiatic Bureau, to organize a Communist Party, the request was granted and an emigre party was formed in October or November 1920.<sup>4</sup> Important members of the party were M.N. Roy, Evelyn, Abani Mukerjee and his wife Rosa, Musood Ali Shah, Abdur Rab, Trimul Acharia, Shaukhat Usmani and Abdullah Safdar. Muhammed Shafiq was its general secretary.<sup>5</sup>

The Indian Military School at 'Indian House' in Tashkent was short lived. The trainees were often fighting and quarrelling among themselves and there was much factionalism in the school. Not more than 36 students were trained.<sup>6</sup> The school was disbanded in May 1921. Perhaps the Soviet Government did not wish to jeopardise economic relations with Great Britain for a project which had much uncertain prospects. Similarly, the attempt to conduct revolutionary activities in the dependent areas of Asia from a base in Central Asia did not prove fruitful, so the Central Asiatic Bureau of the Comintern was abolished.

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4. See : Haithcox 'Communism & Nationalism in India', p. 21.

5. Ibid., p. 22.

6. Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 36.

This task was now entrusted to the newly created Eastern Commission of the executive committee of the Communist International (E.C.C.I.) with headquarters in Moscow. Roy with Shaukat Usmani, Abdul Mazid and Abdul Kabir Sehrai left for Moscow. Abani Mukerji was left in charge of affairs at Tashkant. Meanwhile, a conference of Indian revolutionists was called in Moscow. This conference was also attended by Roy's rivals, mainly participating were Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Bhupendra Nath Dutta, Nalini Gupta, G.A.R. Luhan and Khankoji. But this group was late in arriving and in the mean while Roy convinced the Russians that this group consisted of nationalists and it was contrary to the principles of Communism to support nationalists. This group, largely due to Agnes Smedley's help had also prepared a draft which contradicted Roy's supplementary thesis of the second Congress. This draft was referred to Karl Radek (General Secretary Communist International) he in turn referred it to the Third Congress of Communist International, which however rejected it.<sup>7</sup>

In the Third Congress a decision was also taken that all activities so far India was concerned would be conducted through Roy. In other words, Roy was recognised by the Comintern as India's sole agent. This was a personal triumph for Roy because it meant the exclusion of Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya. We need not go into the details of the controversy between Roy and the Chattopadhyaya group, because it is, strictly speaking, outside

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7. See ; 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 36 and 37.

the scope of this work (But this controversy had an effect upon the communist movement in India and contributed to its weakening). Nalini Gupta, however, remained in Moscow and joined the Roy group.<sup>8</sup>

The Communist University of 'Toilers of the East' had been established in April 1921 and 21 students had come with Roy from Tashkant to attend it. Other Indian groups joined later that year. These various groups of Indians came together and formed the reconstituted CPI. The working committee consisted of Muhammad Shafiq, Roy and Abani Mukerjee. Other prominent members were Shaukat Usmani, Fazl Elahi Qurban and Khusi Muhammad.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile the 'Vanguard' had started (May 15, 1922) and before the close of the year, as already mentioned Roy had published 'India in Transition', 'India's Problem and its Solution' and 'What do we want'.

The problem now before Roy was to see that these should reach various parts of the country (India) and this he was finding difficult from Moscow. He therefore, shifted his headquarters to Berlin, besides Berlin would, Roy thought, be a better place for establishing contacts with secret revolutionary societies.<sup>10</sup>

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8. See ; Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 37.

9. Haithcox, op. cit., p. 24.

10. See ; Memoirs - M.N. Roy, pp. 59-60.

Now, if we pause here and review the nature of the 'Emigri Communist Party' that had been formed, we find interesting and important conclusions that help us in estimating the future 'left wing' politics in India, particularly the Communist movement in India.

Roy, in his 'Memoirs' has explained, that the swiftness and the ease of his change over to communism was due to the impact on him of the programme of the Bolsheviks on the nationalities question. Socialism, wrote Roy, attracted him by its anti-imperialist content.<sup>11</sup>

This explains, precisely why his change over from revolutionary anti-imperialist nationalism to communism was so swift. As Roy himself says, "a sudden leap from ardent nationalism to Communism." This explanation is extremely important as it reflects the true state of affairs and this is not characteristic of Roy alone. The Indian national revolutionaries came to Marxism, not from the workers or peasants movements, in fact they were not connected with it at all, nor, did they understand its significance. They came essentially from the national liberation struggle. Therefore, naturally, their rapid switch over to communism could not be accompanied by an equally rapid and complete reorientation of their national revolutionary ideological and political views (Most of the converts including M.N. Roy had been fighting against the British for many years as terrorist revolutionaries). Therefore, many Indian revolutionaries although they now in Moscow,

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11. Ibid.



proclaimed themselves to be Communists continued to retain quite a few petty - bourgeois revolutionary ideas characterized "by their distrust in the ability of the working class and the masses to engage in conscious political struggle, by their refusal to work among the masses<sup>12</sup> and as a natural consequence, by the exaggeration by them of the role and significance of the military factor in the preparation and execution of the socialist revolution."<sup>12</sup> Roy acknowledges, that even after his change over to Communism he continued, in matters of culture a nationalist. Roy writes that it was only later that he realized that this swift change over was no more than a 'superficial' perfunctory one. Roy has rightly noted that he was not the only one to undergo such a psychological process. Many others too had gone through the same process and as a result had not been able to understand, correctly the Marxist teachings. For instance, Shaukat Usmani in a letter to M.N. Roy, dated 22nd June 1922 wrote "Islam preaches equality and so does communism. That is why I am a communist," similarly Mohammed Shafiq notes M. Shulman -- "Shafiq, a young inexperienced man belongs to the middle class, two months back he was a violent enemy of communism while now he is a communist."<sup>13</sup>

The point is that most of First Indian Communists including Roy came to Communism via the anti-imperialist movement, carrying with them old terrorist ideas acquired earlier. Many of them, for the success of communism pinned their hope on the invasion by a

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12. See ; M. PERSITS - 'Transition of Indian National Revolutionaries to Marxism - Leninism', p. 27. Soviet Review, June 1974.

13. Ibid., p. 29.

revolutionary army from the outside and regarded it as the most important force capable of carrying through a socialist revolution. Mr. P. Unnikrishnan<sup>14</sup> logically argues that this was precisely an expression of disbelief in the revolutionary possibilities of the masses and a rejection of the painstaking revolutionary - educational work among the workers and peasants. But these were the men who were responsible for building up the communist movement in India in the 20's. They turned Communists not because they were convinced of the teaching of Marx or the soundness of his scientific conclusions but because Marxism provided them an answer to the question as to how to carry on effectively and successfully the struggle for liberation of their country.

To a certain extent, it is precisely with <sup>this</sup> phenomenon that many of the difficulties of the ideological development of Indian Communists are linked in particular, the fact that the "inflammatory disorder of Left-Wing Communism", was so widespread among them. The Communist movement came into our country as a blend of two trends that had appeared almost simultaneously, one represented by the emigre group and the other by the group within the country. These two groups merged together (superficially atleast) and formed the Communist party of India.

Lenin had said of Germany in the 19th century, that the prevailing views there at that time were in fact mixed and

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14. P. Unnikrishnan - 'Indian Revolutionaries in the Soviet Union'. Link August 30, 1964, pp. 33-34.

eclectic, "lying between petty-bourgeois and proletarian socialism". The same perhaps can be said of the first Indian Communists who formed the Emigre Party in Russia.

BENGALI REVOLUTIONARIES - During the last quarter of the 19th century students in particular were inspired by Surendra Nath Banerjee's lectures on Mazzani's 'Young India'. Those who were inspired by Mazzani's ideas in Bengal regarded emancipation from foreign domination as a prerequisite to the comprehensive transformation of society. In short those influenced by the radicalism of Mazzani and others developed into the extremist wing of the congress. Besides the partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon, was an important factor contributing to the cause of radicalism in the first quarter of the 20th century. It was generally <sup>viewed</sup> received then as an attempt to reduce Bengal's impact on the national scene. It was particularly alarming to the Bhadrak (educated and landed classes in Bengal). This privileged class had till now, a monopoly of the most prestigious positions available to Indians. This was because they had the advantage of acquiring an English education; which they realized would bring them many advantages. But by the beginning of the 20th century English education was spreading to interior areas therefore the advantages of english education no longer remained a monopoly of this group. At the same time because of population increase and excessive subinfeudation their hold on land was weakened.<sup>15</sup> In other words the socio-economic status of this

15. See ; Haithcox 'Communism & Nationalism in India', p. 27.  
See also 'Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement', specially 3rd chapter entitled 'The Early Impact' 1917-1919, by Gautam Chattopadhyaya,

group, which had till now been dominant, was being reduced. Therefore, it was but natural that the partition of Bengal in 1903, was looked upon by this group as a further attempt to reduce their influence and authority. The indignation caused by the partition of Bengal and due to the organizational abilities of Parmathanath Mitter, Pulin Behari Das, and the inspiration of Arbindo Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal, the activities of the Anushilan Samities and revolutionary societies multiplied.

The Bhadrakalok's vested interest (self preservation) was cloakaded in an appeal to regional and national sentiment. Ghose's paper 'Jugantar',<sup>16</sup> which was very popular then, did this job well. To put down the agitation at the time of Delhi Durbar (1911) the Eastern and Western Bengal were rejoined by Royal Command.<sup>17</sup> The capital was also transformed from Calcutta to Delhi. The transfer of capital was regarded as a punitive measure, by the Bengalis, on the part of a vindictive government. Besides during the war the 'Defence of India Act' provided for arrests of subjects without trial. It was a move to suppress revolutionary societies. The detained were however released after the War and most of them under the influence of C.R. Das and Gandhiji joined the Congress but it is important to bear in mind that they did not give up their revolutionary zeal or belief. After reading Gautam Chattopadhyaya's<sup>18</sup> account of the freedom movement in Bengal and also

16. In the 'Jugantar' Lord Krishna's advice to Arjun 'to perform his duty without concern for reward was interpreted as an injunction to patriots to fight for their motherland without fear of death.

17. The reunited Bengal was reduced to less than half of its former size by separation of certain linguistically distinct areas.

18. See : Gautam Chattopadhyaya account 'Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement especially Chapter VII - "New Ally Against Imperialism".

Haithcox's account, one can safely draw the conclusion that in Bengal Gandhiji's ideas and teaching of non-violence never attained the degree of support they enjoyed elsewhere in India.

M.N. Roy, in the early twenties hoped to penetrate the nationalist movement through these revolutionary societies. As mentioned earlier, that Roy before his departure abroad was a nationalist and a revolutionary (He was a member of Jatin's group which indulged in isolated acts of political assassination). Though now a communist he still tried to re-establish his contacts with the influential members of the revolutionary societies so that he might convert them into Marxist ideology, thereby channelizing their radical ideas into new directions. How much success Roy achieved in converting these radicals into Marxists is a debatable proposition. Debatable in the sense, because most of the influential members of these revolutionary societies belonged to the upper classes, believing in traditional bonds and land <sup>owning</sup> society. Although they did not agree in Gandhian non-violence, but at the same time these revolutionaries could not agree with Roy also, simply because Roy as a communist condemned private ownership in any form and also bourgeois-democratic revolution. But a few Roy did manage to win over. Important among those who were converted were Jiban Lal Chatterjee, a Jugantar leader.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Jiban Lal Chatterjee was however arrested in 1923 with other Jugantar leaders and was released in 1928.

Besides them there were 3 important members of the Anushilan - Jogesh Chatterjee - he was a member of the branch of Hindustan Republican Association in the United Provinces in 1924; he was arrested in Kakori Conspiracy Case and sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment,<sup>20</sup> and Dharani Mehar Goswami, Gopendra Chakravarty and Nalini Kumar Das Gupta. Nalini Kumar Das Gupta had been to India in 1921 and 1923 to contact Indian revolutionaries. He here came in contact with Muzaffar Ahmed who later became an important member of CPI. Another important of Roy's convert was Dharani Goswami. He was a member of the Anushilan.

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20. See : Communism in India, Govt. of India, Home Deptt., 1927-35, pp. 232-233.

21. The Hindustan Republic Association, was an embryo organization which had few centres in United Provinces. Its roots were discovered by the Kakori Conspiracy case and pulled up. In 1929, it took a new title Hindustan Socialist Republic Association. It spread in many parts of the country and flourished there. In Punjab it produced Bhagat Singh who murdered Mr. Saunders in Lahore (1929). It produced a dangerous gang of persons who made an unsuccessful attempt to murder Lord Irwin. Although it can hardly be said that the series of outrages for which this group of desperadoes was responsible was direct result of Communist inspiration, yet the circumstances of the Association's inception gave clear indications of M.N. Roy's direct and indirect influence upon it and the behaviour of its members in the long depth trials revealed the depth of their study of communal theory and history. With the removal of Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt and many others of their way of thinking in U.P., Bihar, Punjab and Sind the association lost its Communist tinge, though retaining the same title reverted to communism pure and simple. See : Communism in India, Govt. of India, Home Deptt., pp. 231, 232, 233-34.

Because of his Communist learnings he was forced out of the Anushilan. He with seven others joined the Bengal Workers and Peasants Party and in 1927 was elected to its Executive Committee. Because of their background and association most of these new converts were more receptive to Comintern aid rather than Communist Ideology.<sup>22</sup>

Besides trying to convert the Muslims and forming emigre communist party in Tashkent (1920 just dealt) and establishing contacts with the revolutionary societies and its members in order to convert them into Marxist, M.N. Roy also attempted in the 20's to radicalize the Indian Labour Movement. The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), was founded in 1920 and till 1929, it was the only Trade Union organization founded on a national scale. Initially, it was a loosely constructed organization, its only purpose was to represent India at various International conferences.<sup>23</sup> In February 1923, Roy established a 'Labour Information Bureau' in Berlin. It was to provide Legal channel of communication between India and Labour Organizations in Europe. The Workers' Welfare League, established in 1917, became the Communist vehicle of influencing trade union activities in India. The League professed political neutrality but according to British intelligence, it was the first foreign agency to introduce Bolshevik principles into the Trade Union Movement in India.<sup>24</sup>

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22. See ; Haithcox, pp. 28 to 31.

23. See ; Overstreet and Windmiller, Communism in India, p. 27.

24. See ; Communism in India, Home Deptt., 1935, pp. 134, 154-159.

But the League was not very effective from the Marxist point of view, primarily because in the early twenties in fact till 1927, its leaders were either nationalists or moderate trade unionists. But by 1922-23 these were, here and there a few pockets of communists. For instance there was a group around Shripat Amrit Dange in Bombay, Muzaffar Ahmed in Calcutta, Mulapuram Singaravelu Chettiar in Madras, Gulam Hussain in Lahore and Shaukat Usmani in United Provinces.<sup>25</sup> These communist groups scattered at various places came into existence primarily due to Roy's efforts. These communist groups were financed by the Comintern, and in the Comintern then so far as India was concerned, Roy's voice not only carried weight but was supreme. In November 1922, Comintern had appropriated £ 70,000 for trade union work in India, £ 35,000 for party work and £ 15,000 for Dange's weekly, the 'Socialist'.<sup>26</sup>

In the early 20's many youngmen and intellectuals had been attracted to Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement. But his sudden termination of the movement left them frustrated and receptive to Marxist ideology. Many thus joined the trade union movement as communists. This is not to suggest that the labour movement turned radical suddenly, the process of radicalization was gradual but it had begun. In Bombay, the communists entered the Trade Union Movement under Dange (1923), in Calcutta the same year under Ahmed. Singaravelu Chettiar, was elected a member to

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25. See : 'Communism in India', Home Deptt., Govt. of India, pp. 121 to 126.

26. Ibid., p. 153.



the Labour Sub-committee of the Congress Party in 1922 (He was in contact with Roy).

While the Communists were trying to penetrate the labour movement, the fourth Congress of the Comintern took place (Nov. 7 to Dec. 3, 1922). Roy again in the fourth Congress warned against the unreliability of the Indian nationalists leaders, who he predicted would eventually become a counter revolutionary force. The 'Thesis on the Eastern Question', drafted by the Eastern Commission, of which Roy was a member warned the Asiatic Communist parties, in cooperating with nationalist leaders, must maintain their own political independence and not allow themselves to become helpless appendages of the national liberation movement. Only when its importance as an independent factor is recognized are 'temporary agreements with the bourgeois democracy permissible and necessary'.<sup>27</sup> How these parties would be able to cooperate with the nationalists and at the same time build an independent political base was not spelled out. At the same time the Comintern maintained, as it had done previously at the Second Congress, that support of bourgeois nationalists in dependent areas could never be inconsistent with the strengthening of the Communist movement. On the contrary Roy was of the view, and he propagated this view more vehemently now, that in advanced colonies like India, the nationalist bourgeois would in the long run betray the nationalist cause. According to Roy in India capitalism and class differentiation were well deve-

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27. See : Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 51-52.  
'Communism in India'.

loped, therefore more attention should be paid to political indoctrination, and organization of peasants and workers who in the end would have to assume leadership of the liberation movement.<sup>28</sup> The Comintern was of the view that this danger was for greater in semi colonial countries like Ceylon, Persia or in countries which are fighting for their independence by exploiting inter imperialist rivalries like Turkey, than in the colonies.<sup>29</sup>

On the whole at the Fourth Congress satisfaction was expressed at the work and games made in India under Roy's guidance. His rapid rise in the Comintern hierarchy is a indication of this.

In 1922, Roy was elected a candidate member of the executive committee of Communist International (E.C.C.I). Later on he became a full standing member. The ECCI controlled all activities of the comintern. In June 1923, he was elected to the

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28. Roy distinguished between the Indian National Congress leadership and the rank and file. For example, he said Chauri Chaura proved the congress rank and file to be revolutionary, but their willingness to agree to suspend the campaign was interpreted by Roy as showing their subservience to reactionary leadership. Roy was convinced that the congress was dominated by the bourgeois and was a instrument of the bourgeois. Roy emphasized that in India, at least the bourgeois (i.e., the Congress), had no revolutionary utility and it was the 'other social elements' that the Comintern should support.

See : Overstreet and Windemiller, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

Also - 'Communism in India', Home Deptt., pp. 252, 261.

29. See : Haithcox, op. cit., p. 34.

Presidium (between the sessions of ECCI, the Presidium had supreme power). The final thesis of the fourth comintern did not accept Roy's view point. The <sup>final</sup> wordings read as following : "The Communists International supports all national revolutionary movements against imperialism." But the Communist International continued to support Roy's leadership of the India movement.

By the end of 1922, with Roy's efforts and under his guidance a nascent Communist movement was struggling to come into existence. By this time the British authorities who had come to know of the nascent movement decided to hit hard on it. Between 1923 and 1925 in connection with Peshawar Conspiracy Case (1923) and Kanpur Bolshevick Conspiracy case most of the Communists were convicted -- charged with the conspiracy to organise a revolutionary organisation for the purpose of overthrowing the British rule in India. It is important to note that this was the first set back to the Communist movement in India, and <sup>thus</sup> discouraged many Indians from openly participating in the Communist movement.<sup>30</sup>

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30. "Slow to take root in a country where the feudal spirit and hereditary principles are so ingrained as in India, the Bolshevick movement grew no less on that account. By 1924 its menace to India's peace and prosperity had become sufficiently serious to necessitate the first important Communist conspiracy case, and in February of that year a formal complain was lodged at Cawnpore against a retention of eight (including absent Roy) of 168 Indian Communists, the charge being that of conspiracy of deprive the King Emperor of the Sovereignty of British India." See : Government of India, Home Deptt., 'Communism in India', p. 110.

To avoid further Government prosecution Roy now proposed for the creation of a dual organisation in India -- a legal revolutionary mass, party which was to be part of the Indian National Congress, and a separate underground Communist Party which would maintain control over the more broad based party serving as its legal cover.<sup>31</sup> The idea had already been in Roy's mind. In 1922 (Nov) at the meeting of the colonial Commission Roy was of the view that the Indian Communists should combine, the independence movement, the labour organization and Kisan Sabhas into one struggle. Roy had directed the Communists in India to form a radical all India party, comprising of the left wing of the congress, the Khilafat movement, and the Sikh movement, inside the Indian National Congress.<sup>32</sup> Roy also suggested Dange in Bombay to build a "mass party of all truly revolutionary elements," given such a name as 'Peoples Party'. Roy also supported Dange's efforts to form a 'Indian Socialist Party' but this move failed.<sup>33</sup> In May 1923 Roy wrote to Muzaffar Ahmed on the same lines, i.e., creation of a secret Communist Party and an open 'Peoples' or 'Workers and Peasants' Party, the later to include all nationalists and revolutionaries, propagating nationalism and anti imperialism. The Peshawar and Kanpur Trials made the task urgent.

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31. Ibid., pp. 129-130.

32. See : 'Communism in India', Home Deptt., pp. 110, 112, 129, 130, 131.

33. See : Haithcox, op. cit., p. 37.

Meanwhile, the fifth congress of the Comintern was convened in June 1924. In this Congress his views remained the same, i.e., the national bourgeois fearing the wrath of the exploited, was already seeking the protection of the British imperialism. Therefore, the Communists should have direct contact only with the most revolutionary classes in India - the proletariat, peasantry and petty bourgeoisie, although he thought petty bourgeoisie as still linked with feudalism and landlordism and separated from the masses, but if peasantry and workers could be organized then that would force the pace of the petty bourgeoisie.<sup>34</sup> In short Roy's argument was that if the national bourgeoisie is already abandoning the Indian National Congress, then direct support of its programme or party should be in favour of an indirect approach through the agency of the proposed peoples party. But neither as defenders of its current programme (which according to Roy still reflected the interests of the national bourgeoisie) nor as an advocate of a full fledged communist platform. The communists should join the (according to Roy) multi class party with a Marxist minimum programme of action. But he strongly felt that the communists should simultaneously develop their own independent power base to capture the nationalist movement.<sup>35</sup> Speaking at this congress on the national question Dmitry Manuilsky criticized Roy's view that class differentiations within the Indian Nationalist movement were well advanced. "The truth is," Dmitry said, "a just

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34. See : Overstreet and Windmiller, 'Communism in India', pp. 70-71.

35. Ibid.

proportion must be looked for between the social movements and the national movement. Can the right of self determination become a contradiction to the interests of the revolution?"<sup>36</sup> In fact, Manuilsky was provoked into charging Roy with deviationism. Because of this disagreement the question was referred to a commission consisting of Stalin, Bukharin, Roy and Dmitry. The final thesis adopted by the fifth Comintern said the task of the Comintern was two fold ; "to create a kernel of a communist party and to support with all the means at its disposal the nationalist revolutionary movement which is fighting imperialism." Roy's qualifications about the manner in which support to the nationalists was to be extended had not won support. The final thesis also directed that there should be "very close contact between the sections in the imperialist countries with the colonies of those countries."<sup>37</sup>

This meant that henceforth, the British Communist party would participate more fully in Indian Communist affairs. And this would result in undermining Roy's position. While at the fourth Comintern Congress satisfaction was expressed at Roy's work, at the fifth Comintern Congress dissatisfaction was clearly discernable. The debates at the fifth Congress as quoted in Overstreet and Windmiller do suggest that there was dissatisfaction at Roy's work.<sup>38</sup> Even the compiled report, 'Communism

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36. See ; Manuilsky in his report to the PLENARY Session -  
quoted in Overstreet & Windmiller, p. 72.

37. Overstreet & Windmiller, 'Communism in India', p. 71.

38. See ; debates of the fifth Comintern Congress quoted in  
Overstreet & Windmiller's Communism in India, pp. 69 to 72.

in India' by the British Intelligence says so : "The Communist International now began to realize and correct its previous errors and to place less reliance on M.N. Roy's omniscience and infallibility where Indian affairs were concerned. From 1924 onwards new tactics became clearly discernible in Moscow's handling of the Indian situation. The Communist role in propaganda, where it was likely to offend the native populations, was repressed, and nationalism was exploited as an unconscious means of furthering communist aims."<sup>39</sup> It was at this time, too, that the indifferent quality of Roy's Indian agents most of whom were dishonest, corrupt and lacking in common principles began to attract the attention of the headquarters in Moscow. As said earlier the fifth Comintern Congress in its final thesis directed the British Communist party to participate more fully in Indian affairs. Overstreet & Windmiller in their work have concluded from this that it was an attempt to undermine Roy's position and authority.<sup>40</sup> But Haitheox is of the opinion that Roy himself

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39. See : 'Communism in India', Home Deptt., pp. 113-114. It also says that Zinowien demanded and obtained the adoption of a scheme of direct contact between the Comintern and the proletarian organizations and parties of British India, ignoring the local Communist Party (and presumably also M.N. Roy, the then directive agency). This report also claims that the orientation of this policy and the wane of Roy's monopoly of power caused the dispatch to India, inspite of Roy's volument protests, of the first of a series of British Communist agents - Percy E. glading of the National Minority Movement. We shall examine the correctness of this charge later.

40. See : Overstreet & Windmiller, 'Communism In India', p. 72.

urged such a course of action. So far as India was concerned Roy held that "the task of the British Communist Party transcends the boundaries of the British Isles. The British Party must make its activities 'imperial' in scope".<sup>41</sup>

In 1923 the attempt at revolution in Germany had failed. Therefore, at the Fifth Congress a new appreciation of the role of the East in Communist global strategy was expressed. It will be appropriate to recall here that Lenin had firmly believed that proletarian revolution would begin in industrialised Europe rather than in Asia. In his colonial thesis, adopted at the Second Comintern Congress he had stated that revolution in Europe was eminent and that upon it depended the success of world revolution. According to him the immediate task in Asia was to weaken the imperialist power by encouraging nationalist revolt. Although this strategy would benefit the nationalist bourgeoisie in the short run but it was justified on the ground that conditions were not ripe for <sup>Communist</sup> ~~communist~~ in Asia. But as revolution in Europe did not materialise, particularly its failure in Germany in late 1923, made the Comintern devote a correspondingly larger amount of attention to this area of the globe. Nevertheless, Lenin clung to his belief, that communism's first advance would be in Europe once its colonial empires became a burden instead of a blessing.

M.N. Roy on the other hand, was of the view that revolution

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41. Quoted in Haithcox from INPRECOR, IV, 42 (1924).



would begin in the East. In his original thesis, Roy had maintained that because "World capitalism is drawing its main resources and income from the colonies," it must be accepted as a "fundamental thesis" that the destiny of world communism depends on the triumph of Communism in the East.<sup>42</sup> But this was not acceptable to Lenin and thus it was modified then. But now it is clear that Revolution in Europe was to be completely dependent on the fortunes of nationalist, anti imperialist movements. In 1870, Marx wrote to Mayer : "I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against the English ruling classes cannot be delivered in England, but only in Ireland."<sup>43</sup> Manuilsky, reminded the delegates of this warning of Marx. Therefore, the Fifth Congress now resolved that in the future it would be necessary to devote more attention, than has been done to the work in the East. It is in this sense that the Fifth Congress of the Comintern is important.

After the 'Kanpur Boleshevik Conspiracy case', the idea of creating a people's party was always in Roy's mind. In December 1924, (at the time of the Belgaun Congress) Roy issued a manifesto entitled "Appeal to the Nationalists", the subject of the manifesto in short was that "in India, nationalism is a revolutionary force", and consequently must pursue a revolutionary course. This the congress had failed to do and therefore it was

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42. See : Second Comintern Congress - Supra.

43. Quoted from 'Communism and Nationalism in India',  
Haithcox, p. 42 below.

no closer to Swaraj than it had been five years before. The nationalist movement could have meaning only when it is based upon the direct action of the revolutionary masses. Roy was of the view that there was discontent among the masses and they will rise in revolt if properly led and organized. This needs a political party having the confidence of the masses and a revolutionary outlook. The choice has to be made between this revolutionary adjustment of social relations and continued Imperialist domination. Roy concluded that the Revolutionary Nationalists party would have the following programme : "national independence, abolition of feudalism, and ~~land~~ landlordism, nationalisation of land, mines, and public utilities, and freedom of religion and worship."<sup>44</sup> Such a programme Roy thought would infuse new life into the nationalist movement.

In July 1924 (before all stages of the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy case had been concluded) the communist International decided to adopt Roy's suggestion that a Indian Communist Party should be formed as a branch of the Communist International. Three months later a Calcutta newspaper correspondent announced that to have faith in Communism in itself is no offence. Thus the fear of law against communism was removed.<sup>45</sup> This gave Satya Bhakta an impetus to form the first Communist Party. In the end

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44. See : 'Communism in India', Home Deptt. 1924-27, pp. 49-50. 'The future of Indian Politics', book published by Razia 1926 also stressed the historic necessity of having a 'Peoples Party'.

45. See : 'Communism in India', Home Deptt., p. 111.

of 1924, Satya Bhakta published first quarterly report of the Indian Communist party.<sup>46</sup> The report claims that the party had been formed in September, 1924, and had a total membership of 78, few months later it claimed a membership of 250.

During the last week of December 1925 (26th Dec.) a Communist Conference was held at Kanpur. Singaravelu Chettiar was elected president. Maulana Hasrat Mohani<sup>47</sup> was the Chairman of the reception committee. Muzaffar Ahmed, J.V. Ghate, J.P. Bergerhotta and some other communists also attended the conference (Dange was in Almora jail, released shortly after on account of poor health). In the Conference a split occurred. Satya Bhakta's group wanted the party to be completely independent and wished it to have the name Indian Communist Party. It was meant to symbolize its distinctly nationalist orientation. Others (those who wanted to retain contact with the comintern) wanted its name as -- Communist Party of India. Satya Bhakta's group was however out numbered and it left. After Satya Bhakta's departure, Ahmed and his supporters organized the 'Communist Party of India'. It consisted mainly of those who had through Roy's efforts had stepped into the communist movement in India.

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46. See ; Haithcox - 'Communism & Nationalism in India', p. 111 and also Overstreet & Windmiller, 'Communism in India', pp. 77-78.

47. Maulana Hasrat Mohani, was the first congress delegate to move a resolution for complete independence at the Congress Session held at Ahmedabad, 1921.  
See ; Overstreet & Windmiller, pp. 78-79.

The party consisted of J.P. Bergerhotta and J.O. Ghate (both joint secretaries of executive committee), K.N. Joglekar, R.S. Nimbkar, Muzaffar Ahmed and C.K. Iyengar from Madras. Headquarters were shifted to Bombay. Although Satya Bhakta was elected to the executive Committee of Communist Party of India and provincial secretary for United Provinces. He however organized with the help of his group the 'United Provinces Samajvadi Dal'. But Roy had Satya Bhakta and his group expelled from the party. And thus by 1927 his Samajvadi Dal died a natural death.<sup>48</sup>

On November 1, 1925, the 'Labour Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress' was organized. Its founder members were Hemant Kumar Sarkar, Qutabuddin Ahmed and Shamsuddin Hussain. On January 2, Muzaffar Ahmed joined the party and its name was subsequently changed to 'Peasants and Workers Party of Bengal'.<sup>49</sup> This new party sought to attain independence by organising workers and peasants for whose interests it would fight in <sup>the</sup> legislatures and its members were free to belong to the Labour Swaraj party. It would be recalled here that Roy was already much anxious to build such a party. In February, 1927, Gopendra Chakravarty, Dharani Goswami and Saumyendra Nath Tagore joined the party. Saumyendra Nath Tagore became its

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48. See : 'Communism in India', Home Deptt. and Overstreet & Windmiller, pp. 78-79.

49. Saumyendra Nath Tagore, active member of Labour Swaraj Party, claims Muzaffar Ahmed was one of its founder. The official history of the party does not however mention his name.

general secretary. He however, proceeded to Russia as party's delegate and was succeeded by Abdul Rezak Khan. But the defacto secretary throughout the period was Muzaffar Ahmed. Muzaffar Ahmed also edited the party paper called 'LANGAL' later called 'Gana Vani'. Roy was happy over the formation of the party but he was not very happy in the open way the party was organised. Roy wanted an illegal apparatus to be build up side by side with the legal paratus. Roy was also not happy with the transfer of Headquarters from Bombay to Delhi. As he very aptly wrote; "the main field of our activity must be Bombay and Bengal.\* In other words, a working class party "must be aware where the working class is."<sup>50</sup>

We had seen in the second, third and fourth Congress of the Comintern, that Roy was all along distrustful of the nationalist leaders of the Congress party. In fact, this was one of the major issues of his differences with Lenin. Naturally, therefore, the idea of a peoples party was born in his mind as an alternative to the Congress party. But in the 20's the Congress party under Gandhiji's leadership began to assume a mass nationalist character and it started attracting members sympathetic to socio-economic reform. In other words, a left wing inside the Congress started to gain influence. This brought a change in Roy's thinking, he now hoped to convert the Congress itself into a 'peoples party'. This is evident from a letter dated March 1924, that he wrote to Bergerhotta saying that the political task of the Indian Communists

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50. See ; Letters of M.N. Roy, quoted 'Communism in India' Home Deptt., 1924-27, pp. 54-55.

was to organise "a Republican every of the nationalist movement as that was the most suitable way to penetrate into the Communist party."<sup>51</sup>

Roy further elaborated his views in this connection saying that there was a 'large revolutionary element in India' which was not ideologically prepared to join the Communist party. So, consequently, the CPI, will remain a small party without much influence. In other words what Roy was suggesting was that the CPI will have to broaden its organizational apparatus so that it can function. And for this task the All India Workers and Peasants party was better suited. This party with its multi-class composition would not be the real Communist party. The Communists in his views would form an illegal nucleus inside it giving ideological education and political training to the members, thus in course of time the 'Workers and Peasants Party' will be gradually transformed into a real communist party. Roy pursuing this idea also suggested 'The Bengal Workers and Peasants Party' to call a conference and organize such a party at the national level, i.e., "Workers and Peasants Party of India."<sup>52</sup>

Haithcox is of the view that "Roy's efforts to establish an organizational relationship with the Congress left wing paralleled the attempt of the Chinese Communist Party to maintain its alliance with the Koumintang and later left Koumintang". Both these

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51. Ibid., p. 54.

52. See ; 'Communism in India' Home Deptt., pp. 130-135.

The report quotes Roy extensively. Roy gave not only the idea of such a party, but also its organizational details and the very thought to be carried out. See also Masani,

plans made it necessary to conceal the more radical communist objectives. "Roy hoped that the Indian Communists would be able to duplicate the apparent success of their Chinese counterparts in working within the Kuomintang."<sup>53</sup> In an article entitled "From Gaya to Gauhati" (published in his journal "The Masses") Roy urged the Congress left wing to take lessons from the Chinese revolution "The Koumintang has been successful in winning all revolutionary nationalists in the struggle against foreign imperialism (We shall see later, that Roy's contention about the Chinese Revolution is totally incorrect). The same Roy thought could be done by the Indian nationalist movement.

As stated earlier, at the Fifth Comintern Congress doubts were expressed on Roy's ability and Zinoviev at the Fifth Comintern Congress had obtained the adoption of a scheme of direct contact between the Comintern and the Communists organizations and groups in British India. The contact, however, was not direct and the Communist Party of Great Britain became <sup>the</sup> organizational link.<sup>54</sup> Early in 1925 Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) formed a colonial committee and Percy E. Glading was sent to India to survey the revolutionary situation. He arrived in India on 30th, 1925, and on his return reported to CPGB that no Communist groups existed at all.<sup>55</sup> During this period there

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53. Quotations in this paragraph are from Haithcox 'Communism and Nationalism in India', pp. 49-50 and 'Communism in India' Home Deptt. 1927 and Letters of M.N. Roy, pp. 104-110.

54. Fifth Congress of the Comintern, pp 69 to 74.  
Overstreet & Windmiller 'Communism in India'.

55. Overstreet & Windmiller, p. 74.

was a lot of confusion, and many foreign communists groups attempted to control the India Communist movement.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile the CPGB planned an Oriental Conference to be held in Europe, and G. Goswami, N.M. Joshi, and Chaman Lal all moderate trade Unionists were invited to the conference.<sup>57</sup>

In order to discuss the proposed Oriental Conference a meeting of European Communists was held in Amsterdam (July 11, 12, 1925). Robson of the CPGB prepared a report of the meeting at Amsterdam. The Robson reports said that there was serious conflict between Roy and CPGB over the direction of Indian affairs. It also said that Roy was vexed by the fact that while planning the proposed Oriental Conference he was not consulted. Roy, however, did not agree with Robson's report, not with the view that CPGB should have the right to control work conducted in India.

To quote Roy's "This smacks of Imperialism"<sup>58</sup> from Overstreet and Windmiller account one thing is clear that during this period there was a lot of confusion as to whom should control communist activities in India. Roy, it seems definitely wanted to keep the control of Communist activity in his own hands and did not much like the CPGB controlling Indian affairs, because he thought that CPGB did not have sufficient understanding of the Indian problems.

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56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., p. 75.

See also Masani 'Communism in India', p. 25.

58. See ; Overstreet & Windmiller, p. 75.



However, he could not prevent CPGB from interfering in colonial areas especially India. The account that follows shows that British Emissaries played a significant part in the period that follows.

On December 1926, Roy left for China. Roy had wanted to go to India but was sent to China. Why was Roy then sent to China? (This question becomes all the more relevant because Roy was opposed to the policy that the Comintern was pursuing in China, we shall examine this later). The generally accepted version among scholars is that Roy was sent to China so that he could be removed from active participation in Indian affairs. This view point is shared by Overstreet and Windmiller, Masani and the Govt. of India report entitled 'Communism in India', also supports it.<sup>59</sup> It is also suggested that Roy agreed to go to China because Stalin promised him that <sup>4</sup>he was successful in China he would subsequently send him to India.<sup>60</sup> Overstreet and Windmiller have further said that Roy was sent so that he could not attend the proposed Oriental Conference (later called the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities Feb. 10-15, 1927) which was to be attended by Chaman Lall, G. Goswami and N.M. Joshi (trade Unionists belonging to the left wing of the Congress) with whom Roy was not in good terms.

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59. See : Masani - 'Communism in India', pp. 25.

Also : Overstreet & Windmiller - 'Communism in India', p. 94 above and Govt. of India, Home Deptt., 'Communism in India', pp. 111-112-113.

60. Overstreet & Windmiller, p. 94.

This view point i.e., Roy was dispatched to China in order to remove him from India, does not seem very correct. If Stalin was annoyed or dissatisfied with Roy's work how does one account for Roy's recent promotions in the Comintern hierarchy. Besides, after the seventh Plenum of ECCI (Nov. 22 to Dec. 16, 1926) the Comintern had placed all hopes on China. Therefore, there seems no reason why Stalin would send Roy to China if he was dissatisfied with his work. Roy was also wanted in India in connection with Kanpur <sup>Bolshevik</sup> ~~Bolshevik~~ case, his going to India would mean sure arrest, and long imprisonment, and Stalin must have known this. On the other hand members of the CPGB had the advantage of British citizenship and therefore they could operate in India with relative freedom. Overstreet and Windmiller's conclusion that Roy was sent because CPGB wanted to take charge of Communist movement in India is not very correct. Similarly Masani's remark that, "British tended to monopolise India and Rajne Palme Dutt and his brother Clemens Dutt became the pundits to lay down the law of the Indian Communist Party", also appears an exaggeration.<sup>61</sup> Philip Spratt, in an interview to Haithcox denies the charge that the CPGB wanted to control the Indian Communist movement in Roy's absence. He also says that the relationship between R. Palme Dutta, Clemens Dutta and Roy was rather warm. Philip Spratt has also acknowledged that Roy made arrangements for Spratt's mission in India. It is also important to remember that after the failure of the 1926 "General Strike" in Britain, the CPGB was considered more of a liability than an asset.<sup>62</sup> Taking these circumstances

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61. See ; Masani, op. cit., p. 25.

62. See ; Haithcox, op. cit., p. 52.

into account it is doubtful if the Comintern considered the CPGB as a permanent replacement for Roy in India.

Roy's efforts to radicalize the national movement by organising the CPI and WPP and thereby penetrating the Indian National Congress was also showed by certain British emissaries. Prominent among them were Rajne Palme Dutta, his brother Clemens Dutta, Philip Spratt, Benjamin Francis Bradley, Hugh Lester Hutchinson etc. Rajani Palme Dutta had helped in the formation and organization CPGB in 1920. He was also the editor of Party's journals, 'Workers Weekly' and 'Labour' monthly. In 1926 he published his famous book -- 'Modern India'. In this book like Roy, he proposed the formation of 'Workers and Peasants Party'.<sup>64</sup> In December 1926, Philip Spratt,<sup>65</sup> as emissary of the CPGB arrived in India. His job was to contact Indian Communists scattered in various urban centres and assist them in establishing a Workers and Peasants Party on an All India Scale. It was thought that such a party would be attractive to radical congressmen and was viewed as a possible vehicle for work within both, the Congress Party and the Indian Labour Movement.<sup>66</sup> Spratt and other British emissaries worked through a series of connected organizations - CPGB, the league against Imperialism, the Welfare League of India and the foreign bureau of CPI in Europe.<sup>67</sup> In Feb. 1925, Percy E. Glading

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64. M.N. Roy's book 'Future of Indian Politics' also appeared the same year. It also proposed the same idea - "formation of WPP on a national scale.

65. Philip Spratt left the Communist Movement in the 30's and during the second World War became supporter of M.N. Roy's Radical Democratic Party.

66. See Haithcox, p. 83.

67. The foreign Bureau of CPI was established on advice of Comintern to clarify lines of authority and ensure the

member of the British Bureau of Red International of Labour Unions, came to India to study labour conditions; he also helped to establish a 'labour party' with Lala Lajpat Rai as President. The move was a failure and he returned to England after 3 months presenting an unfavourable report on the progress of Communism in India.<sup>68</sup>

In Bombay Philip Spratt worked with George Alison. Alison had been sent to India "to develop left wing inside the All India Trade Union Congress, but to keep out of party politics except in advisory capacity."<sup>69</sup> But Alison was soon arrested and sentenced on a false passport charge for 18 months and later deported to England.

In September 1927, Benjamin Francis Bradley another emissary of CPGB joined Spratt. In September 1928, Hugh Leister Hutchinson joined them. Hutchinson mainly confined himself to a Bombay labour journal 'New Shark', which he edited, and to certain youth organizations. He was also Vice President of the Girni Kamgar Union (GRU).<sup>70</sup> But by and large, Spratt felt that the Indian Communists

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(continued from previous page)

coordination of Communist activities in India. Its members were Roy, Mohammed Ali (Alias Sipasai) and Clemens Dutta.

See Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 69 to 84.

68. See ; Govt. of India, 'Communism in India' Home Deptt. 1927, pp. 114-115.

69. Ibid.

70. This Communist dominated Union played a prominent part in the 1928 general strike of Cotton Workers in Bombay.

had not taken full advantage of the opportunity provided by the Congress party's relative neglect of the trade union movement.<sup>71</sup> Spratt tried to channelize the energies of the small band of Bombay Communists in the right direction. In January 1927, at his suggestion, a Bombay Workers and Peasants Party was organised. S.S. Mirjekar was chosen as the Party's Secretary and S.V. Ghatge, K.N. Joglekar and R.S. Nimbkar were elected to the executive committee.

D.R. Thendli, the non-communist labour leader was made the Party's president. Dange (after his release in May, 1927) and Benjamin Bradley upon his arrival in September were included in the Executive Committee.<sup>72</sup> In May, 1927, a meeting of the CPI was held in Bombay. At this meeting the CPI was reorganised and a constitution ratified. S.V. Ghatge was elected General Secretary a post which he held until March 1929. Muzaffar Ahmed, R.S. Iyengar and S.A. Dange were elected to the Party's Presidium. It was also resolved that the CPI should organize within the Congress party a 'strong left wing', in cooperation with the 'radical nationalists'. In the report issued at the time of the conference it was stated that "our movement is neither imported

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71. See ; Haithcox, 'Communism and Nationalism', in India, p. 55.

72. It is interesting to note that most of the members of the Bombay Workers and People's Party were Congressmen. Some held important posts in Bombay Provincial Congress Committee. But they were also members of the labour group, an organization which had been formed within the Congress Party at the instigation of George Allison.

from abroad nor a group maintained by Russia for its propaganda in India. (This was merely a trick to avoid persecution). In December that year CPI applied for affiliation with the Comintern.<sup>73</sup>

In August 1927, Spratt was arrested on charge of sedition. He had written a pamphlet - 'India and China', which asked Indians to follow the example of Koumintang. During the period (before and after his release) he travelled a lot in an attempt to organise Workers and Peasants Party. In Punjab, his efforts resulted in the formation of Punjab 'Kirti Kisan Party' (Sept. 1928). In the following month, the inaugural conference of the United Provinces Workers and Peasants Party was held at Meerut. P.C. Joshi was chosen its General Secretary and Chaudhary Pharam Vir Singh was elected vice president (Chaudhary Pharam Vir Singh was a swarajist member of U.P. Legislative Assembly).

Besides these, J.F. Ryan, member of Australian Communist Party and the Chairman of New South Wales Trade and Labour Council arrived in India on 18th November, 1928. His mission was to attend the All India Trade Union Congress at Jharia on 22nd December 1928. He wanted to secure the affiliation of that body to the Pan-Pacific Trade-Union Secretariat and thus link up the fight against imperialism in India with the Far East. This he failed to do though his speech at the Congress made a very favourable impression. J.W. Johnston, an American emissary, on behalf of the League Against Imperialism, with a similar mission visited

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73. See : Govt. of India 'Communism in India' Home Deptt. Affiliation was granted in 1930.

India. He had freely associated with Spratt, Muzeffar Ahmed and other well known Indian Communists and he delivered several most objectionable speeches before he was arrested and deported. "These two foreigners raised the Indian Communists in their own estimation and provided a source of inspiration for further and greater efforts. The meaning of the slogan "Workers of the World Unite" was made clearer to the Indian labourer.<sup>74</sup>

As we have seen because of Roy's efforts (after the Second Congress of the Comintern) Communist groups developed in many centres in India in the 20's. As stated earlier he attempted to develop a revolutionary movement in India by organizing workers and peasants and intellectual and later by his tactics of penetrating into the Indian National Congress. His was a concrete effort to Radicalize the Indian National Movement by laying down a systematic programme of socio economic revolution (This is evident from his work "Future of Indian Politics"). It would certainly be an exaggeration to conclude here that he alone was responsible for the broadening of the communist movement, and radicalizing the National Movement in the 20's. As we have already seen that Indian Communists and British missionaries did much in this direction, and their roles and efforts cannot be minimized. Specially from 1926 to 1928 (during this period Roy was in China) the British Missionaries were solely responsible for broadening the Communist movement and radicalizing the national movement. But one thing is certain (taking the period as a whole)

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74. See : Govt. of India, 'Communism in India', pp. 113 to 116.  
See also Masani, p. 25.

that Roy had raised a band of devoted communists in India, who had begun to establish their influence among the working classes. His regular writing in the form of letters, articles and books gave them an insight into scientific Marxism, a sense of direction and a purpose to be achieved. By the end of 1928 there were apart from the CPI, four workers and peasants parties in India (In Bombay, Bengal, Punjab and U.P.). And plans were being laid for the formation of an All India Workers and Peasants' Party at a conference to be held at the end of the year.

Thus in the 20's through Roy's efforts, the tendency of going to the 'masses' and organizing them in order to associate them with the general movement for the country's political advancement was gaining recognition by all political bodies (including the congress).

#### M.N. Roy and China

Although China and Roy's work there, is strictly speaking, outside the scope of this work. But it was thought then (rightly or wrongly we shall conclude later on) that China was a stepping stone to India. As Zinoviev at the colonial commission session (March 1925) reported that Persia and Afghanistan had been replaced by China as the "Central starting point for action in India".<sup>75</sup> China apart from providing moral inspiration to Indian revolutionists would also serve as a strategic base providing direct assistance. The Comintern slogan now was "Via revolutionary China to the Federal Republic of the United States of India."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>. Govt. of India - "Communism in India", Home Deptt., pp. 10-12.

<sup>76</sup>. Ibid., p. 10.



Besides while Roy was leaving for China he was at the peak of his career<sup>77</sup> in the International Communist movement and by the time he returned after the failure in China, he was virtually no where (though formally he was ousted in 1929). And since our study takes Roy efforts into special account therefore a brief mention about his China Mission and his role there are essential. It will not side track the main hypothesis but, in fact, will uphold it.

In the 20's, China was in the throes of a revolution. The revolution was led by the nationalist party - Kuo Mintang. The communists were in alliance with it and as a result of that alliance they had build up a strong position for themselves. The alliance was established on the ground that the revolution that was taking place was an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal national democratic revolution and therefore, a four class alliance of the capitalists, the petty bourgeoisie, the peasants

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77. In February 1926 Roy was appointed to the editorial staff of the Communist International. At the 6th Plenum of ECCI (Feb. to March 1926) he was appointed to the Presidium and named Chairman of Eastern Commission. He was also a member of ECCI Organization Bureau and Secretariat. After the Seventh Plenum (Nov. 22 to December 16, 1926) he was elected to the membership of the British and Agrarian Commissions, and he and Petrov (Petrov was a member of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party) were chosen to serve as joint secretaries of Chinese Commission. Shortly after Roy joined the Political Secretariat of the ECCI. Thus by the end of 1926, Roy had attained the membership on all four of the official policy making bodies of the Comintern - the Presidium, the Political Secretariat, the ECCI, and the World Congress.

This account is based primarily on the Report of Govt. of India, Home Deptt. 'Communism in India', pp. 10-23. Overstreet & Windmiller, pp. 91-94.

and the workers should fight together for its accomplishment. The Communist party of China had been instructed to join the Kuomintang and work with it. Michael Borodin was there as the representative of the Communist International and was guiding the work of the revolution (a member of Russian Military advisors were also there, headed by General Bluecher, known there as General Gallen).

Early in 1926, the alliance began to break up. In March 1926, General Chian Kai Shek staged a coup and arrested a number of Communist workers. The question that arose was, whether or not, the Communists should continue their alliance with the Kuomintang. Here there were differences of opinion in the Communist International which was guiding the Chinese revolution (This was because of conflicting reports from China). In the end, it was decided not to break with the Kuomintang and to continue cooperation, more particularly with its left wing. Therefore, a meeting of the executive committee of the Communist International, generally known as the seventh Plenum was held from November 22 to December 16, 1926, principally to discuss the China problem.

Much has been written, to seek an explanation for the debacle of the Chinese Communist Movement in 1927. Hatcher is of the opinion (and rightly so) that these studies on China emphasise more the confusion surrounding the event. He is of the view that to understand the principles underlying the defeat of the CCP, it is necessary to keep in mind that the Comintern's

principle aim in China at this time "was the elimination of the imperialist influences especially British, rather than promotion of communism."<sup>78</sup> Comintern strategy for China was devised from the point of view of the Soviet Unions World wide struggle against Western imperialist forces. This is clearly implied in the resolution on China question adopted at the VII Plenum -- "The Chinese resolution by the mere fact of its anti imperialist character is an inseparable part of the international revolution."<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, the advance of the Nationalist Army towards the north, under Chiang Kai Shek was to be supported because it undermined Imperialist domination. As the resolution on the China problem in the VII Plenum further says -- "The Canton Government is revolutionary primarily because it is anti imperialist". The Chinese revolution and the government created by it must strike at the root of imperialist power in China. It further stated -- "Overthrowing the imperialist, abolishing all survivals of old feudal relations, national liberation, the revolutionary reforms of internal and social relations -- these tasks were originally connected with each other and represent the one task of the Chinese revolution."<sup>80</sup> For this task it was thought necessary for the party to make compromises in order to get the support of the military, landholding and petty bourgeoisie

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78. See : Haithcox- 'Communism and Nationalism in India', p. 60.

79. See ; 'Thesis on the situation in China by the Seventh extraordinary Plenum of ECCI' and Robert C. North and Kenia J. Rudin. Cited in Haithcox's book, pp. 60-62-64.

80. Ibid., p. 61.

class in order to defeat the imperialist influence. Radical agrarian reforms were expressed in general terms but no concrete steps or proposal were mentioned to implement them.

The resolution on China reflects Stalin's bias in favour of the anti-imperialist aspect of the Chinese Civil War. But Roy in his book 'Revolution and counter Revolution in China' has stated the following about the thesis and his mission to China ;

"The meeting of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in November 1926 adopted a new thesis on the Chinese Revolution, the central point of which was that the Chinese Revolution must from that time be developed as an agrarian revolution. The leadership of the Chinese Communist Party as well as the representative of the C.I. in China were of a different view. They still maintained that the nationalist bourgeoisie should be helped to lead the revolution and class struggle should not be accentuated for the sake of national unity. I was alone to advocate the different point of view that the Chinese Revolution had reached a critical moment in which it must strike out a new course and a fetish should not be made of the alliance with the Kuomintang. The executive Committee of the C.I. adopted my point of view, which was opposed in the beginning by Stalin himself. But Stalin was brought around to my view and the thesis adopted by the ECCI was drafted by me. Immediately afterwards I left for China."<sup>81</sup>

So Roy was discharged after the VII Plenum to China as a

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81. See ; M.N. Roy - 'Revolution and Counter Revolution in China', p. 538.

representative of the Comintern to implement the policy in whose <sup>formation</sup> implementation he had shared. This view point ~~is~~ appears more correct than Overstreet and Windmiller's point that Roy was discharged to China so that he could be out off from India (already referred). Roy's position and tasks in China were extremely difficult. It appears now that there were important differences from the time of the VII Plenum, between C.I. and the Chinese Communist Central Committee, some of the Chinese Comrades were hesitant about unleashing a large scale agrarian revolution over the countryside in China.<sup>82</sup> The situation was made further difficult by the opposition of Borodin. The basic differences between Roy and Borodin were over broadening or deeping the revolution. Roy was for the latter.<sup>83</sup>

The situation was complicated also because in April 12, 1927 Chiang had launched a coup against his communist allies. In May 1927 the VIII Plenum of ECCI was called to reconsider the China situation.<sup>84</sup> The CCP was advised to preserve its alliance

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82. See : 'Memoirs', M.N. Roy, p. 578.

See also Overstreet and Windmiller 'Communism in India', pp. 92-93.

83. See : 'Memoirs', p. 278.

84. After the coup Chiang called a meeting of his supporters in the Central Committee of the Kuomintang. This meeting held in Nanking, signalled a break between Chiang and his followers on the one hand, and Wang Ching-wei, the Kuomintang left wing in Weehan, and its communist supporters on the other hand. The Weehand fraction of the party, known as the Left Kuomintang, reacted on April 17th by 'expelling Chiang Kai Shek from the party. The left Kuomintang controlled the Wuhars area.

with Hankow Government and the left Koumintang, and at the same time pursue a more radical programme in <sup>the</sup> country side. This was highly impracticable. In April the second Northern expedition was on way under General Tang Shing Chil. The Chinese Communists and their Russian advisors in Han Kow decided to support the expedition. Borodin considered this course of action necessary in order to avoid a split in the left Koumintang. The Wuhan Government (left Kuomintang) adopted a policy of restraining the peasants and labour movements in the interests of united support to the revolutionary army (Borodin favoured this). Roy, however, disagreed with this policy. Instead of restraining them, Roy wanted to intensify the revolution in the area under the control of <sup>the</sup> Wuhan Government, 'such a policy he argued would force the more reactionary of the militanist and political leaders in Wuhan and smooth the way to the goal of capturing the nationalist organizations. Among the Russians Advisors only General Oberst Galen supported Roy's position.<sup>85</sup>

Roy was always of the opinion that the Chinese Revolution will win as an agrarian revolution, "or it will not win at all". In opposition to the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party Roy proposed "an organization, concentration and consolidation of <sup>the</sup> revolutionary forces by, (1) pressing the agrarian revolution; (2) establishing peasants power in villages; (3) creating a revolutionary army that would not be merely a creature of land owing generals.<sup>86</sup>

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85. See ; Haithcox, "Communism and Nationalism in India", p. 67 below.

86. Quoted in Memoirs from M.N. Roy's 'Mission in China' by Robert C North & Xertia Kudin, p. 57.

Efforts were made to settle these differences at the Fifth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held in Han Kow in May 1927. At the end of long discussion a resolution was adopted which in words accepted Roy's point of view. But words were not backed with action. There was the same reluctance to develop independent action of workers and peasants on the ground that they would alarm and alienate the left Kuomintang. Meanwhile, there were many peasant revolts but they received no support from the Communists. They were crushed by the militarists belonging to the left Kuomintang. If the Communists had acted at that time according to Roy, things would have taken a different course, but his advice fell on deaf ears. At last Roy requested Stalin to send definite instructions to follow a revolutionary course of action. But by the time Stalin's telegram arrived, "the situation was desperate."<sup>87</sup> The telegram did not have any effect. Borodin considered the instructions 'Ludicrous' and he sent the reply, "Orders received, shall obey as soon as possible."

The end soon came. The left Kuomintang considered that the Communists had conspired against it, that they had fomented peasants revolts and that they were out to capture power for themselves. The telegram from Stalin was relied upon for making these charges. Later, Roy was accused of having committed an indiscretion in giving its copy to Wang Chi-Wei, the leader of the left Kuomintang. But really speaking the telegram was only

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87. In the telegram Stalin not only supported an intensification of the agrarian revolution through the seizure of land, but also urged immediate formation of a workers and peasants army. It also said 'to liquidate the unrediable generals immediately'.

See Overstreet & Windmiller, p. 93 & Haithcox, p. 71.

an excuse. The left Kuo Mintang was no longer prepared to go with the Communists. Their relations had already become strained. The Left Koumintang wanted to patch up its quarrels with Chiang Kai Shek. On the other hand an offensive was opened against the Communists, a large number of them were arrested and executed and the rest had to flee and save their lives. Borodin and all other Russian advisors were asked to return to Russia. By the end of July Roy also left via Moscow to Berlin.

When Mao Tse-tung<sup>88</sup> was asked as to who was most responsible for the failure of GGP in 1927, he placed the greatest blame on Chen Tuhsin (General Secretary of CCP at that time) for indecisive leadership. Next most responsible for the debacle was Borodin who, "was ready to do everything for the bourgeoisie, even to the disarming of the workers, which he finally ordered. On Roy's role Mao said, "he stood a little to the left to both Chen and Borodin, but he only stood." According to Mao, Roy could talk but he failed to offer any method of realization.<sup>89</sup>

It seems now that the Comintern and the CCP had neglected for long the essential task of building an independent power base. The CCP was definitely reluctant to make a bold bid for peasant support for the fear of abandoning the Wuhan Regime and arousing its anger. Haithcox, commenting on the Chinese episode rightly says that, "both Roy and Borodin wished to preserve the nationalist alliance."<sup>90</sup> They differed only on the price they

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88. See ; Edgar Snow, 'Red Star Over China', pp. 147-148.

89. Ibid.

90. Haithcox, 'Communism & Nationalism in India', p. 74 alone.



thought would have to be paid. Borodin justified his concessions by reference to the anti imperialist aspect of the nationalist revolution. Roy, in contrast placed more emphasis on radicalising the Left Kuomintang. And because of their conflicting attitudes, neither possibility was given a fair trial. But in the circumstances, then existing in China, neither approach would have helped the Communists to capture power.

"The success of Communists in colonial and semi-colonial areas is dependent on their ability to reconcile the cominterns two aims -- personified by Roy and Borodin - with respect to such areas namely, both the strengthening and radicalizing of nationalists, anti-imperialist movements."<sup>91</sup> The Comintern policy in China in the late 20's failed not because Roy and Borodin pursued different lines and could not agree so on fundamentals, but because the existing circumstances and conditions in China made agreement impossible. It appears and perhaps truly that the national cause and the indigenous class struggle then in China were irreconcilable. Judging from the historical point of view, we can say with a certain amount of certainty, that the Communists have come to power under circumstances where these two interests coincide. For instance, in China at the time of Japanese invasion, in Yugoslavia during the IIInd World War, in North Vietnam and in Kerala.<sup>92</sup>

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91. Ibid., p. 74.

92. The nationalist character of the demand of the Malayalam speaking people for a separate linguistic state of Kerala and the rise to power of the Kerala Communists as champions of this demand is revealed in E.M.S. Namboodripad, The National Question in Kerala, pp. 154-156.

The Communist Party of China started succeeding only after 1934, because from then onwards it started acting independently of the Kou Mintang thereby developing under its own leadership a mass nationalist struggle against the Japanese attack.<sup>93</sup> The point is that Peasant nationalism as developed in China in 1930's and 1940's represented the union of these two potentially revolutionary forces. For a Policy promoting such a union Roy coined the phrase 'Twentieth Century Jacobinism'. In other words, Communist advancement depends upon the existence of a mass nationalist movement. This mass nationalist movement is a pre-condition for strengthening and radicalizing the communist movement.<sup>94</sup> Such a movement is essentially sympathetic to the peasant population and their needs, and they constitute the bulk of population in the underdeveloped regions of <sup>the</sup> world.

It is clear that neither the Koumintang nor the left Koumintang was a mass nationalist party.<sup>95</sup> Both were dependent on militarists who were strongly opposed to agrarian reforms. Nationalist sentiment aroused in the Chinese peasantry only after the Japanese occupation of 1937. Therefore, to conclude, we could

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93. Although a United Front with the Kuomintang was formed in 1936. But this front virtually ceased to exist after the New Fourth Army incident of January 1941. Moreover the Communists expanded into Japanese occupied territories and not in areas where the facade of the United Front was still maintained - for instance as in Hankow. The success of CCP cannot be attributed to post 1935 United Front.

94. See Haithcox, 'Communism and Nationalism in India', p. 75. See also Letters of Roy- Govt. of India. Home Deptt., 1935.

95. Members of both, the Koumintang and the Left Koumintang were generally intellectuals and urban middle classes.

say that the Comintern's policy with regard to their China failed not because of Roy as is generally accepted) but because the nationalist and anti imperialist policies of the Kuomintang could not be translated into mass nationalist terms.

The defeat of the revolution in China was a blow to Roy's career in the Comintern. The blow did not come, however, until over a year and a half, and when it came it was not on the Chinese issue. Stalin could not proceed against Roy as he was personally involved in it at every stage, therefore, condemning Roy would amount to condemning himself. The IX Plenum of the Comintern was held on February 1928. Here Roy was to make his report on China and he hoped to win Stalin's personal approval. But Stalin refused to see him. It is only then that Roy realized that his Comintern career was over and his life was in danger. He therefore left Moscow some weeks later, travelling mostly by night.

It was at the 6th World Congress of CI that the attack on Roy began. (Owing to illness Roy was not present at the famous Congress). In his famous article 'My Crime',<sup>96</sup> Roy states that Kuresinen, in his report on the colonial question attacked him as the father of the so called 'Theory of decolonisation'. According to Kuresinen, Roy had just forwarded the view that British imperialism would gradually lead the Indian people to freedom. Kuresinen characterised Roy in his report as 'Lackey of Imperialism'. The charge was absolutely unfounded (Roy made it clear

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96. See : 'Memoirs', M.N. Roy, pp. 580-581.

later by submitting a statement on decolonialisation to the Communist International). The charge was merely an excuse, the Comintern had already decided to take a sharp turn to the left and it became necessary to sacrifice Roy. The decision was taken in the light of circumstances obtaining in Russia where it was decided to embark upon a programme of rapid industrialization and forced collectivization of agriculture. The same rapid march was imposed upon the World Communist Movement.<sup>97</sup> The Comintern abandoned the tactics of united front, although the situation did not warrant such a change of policy. Roy was in sharp disagreement with this line of the Comintern on India as well as on many other issues.<sup>98</sup>

As we have already seen, Roy helped to formulate as early as the second Comintern Congress, a distinction between different types of Nationalist movements -- between those of a truly revolutionary and those of a merely reformist character. As a result of the deliberations on the national and colonial question at the Congress,<sup>99</sup> Lenin had concluded that the policy of supporting nationalist, anti Imperialist movements was to be followed only in situations where it did not hinder with the development of class struggle. But due to the anti imperialist aspect of the Chinese revolution, this principle was violated in 1927, by

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97. See : V.H. KARNIK, Epilogue, 'Memoria', M.N. Roy, and also 6th Comintern Congress.

98. See : 6th Comintern Congress, pp. 108-111, in Overstreet & Windmiller - 'Communism in India'.

99. See : 'Second Comintern Congress' in the Thesis itself.

maintaining CCP's alliance with the left Kuomintang even at the expense of class struggle if necessary. This was the basic charge for the failure of the Chinese revolution.<sup>100</sup> Roy thus placed the for the set back in China on Borodin and CCP leadership. It is important to note that Roy never acknowledged Stalin's responsibility in the affair even though it was he who placed particular emphasis on the nationalist content of the Chinese revolution. Roy even after his expulsion from the Comintern did not criticize Stalin. His attachment to Stalin is revealed in a letter written from the prison in January 1936.

"You see after all I remain a personal admirer of my ex friend, who used to pride over our racial affinity, and called me 'gold'. Now he won't appreciate me even as copper. But I have the weakness of giving the devil his due. And in my account, his due is very considerable. I was publicly castigated for his weakness once - at <sup>Wilmington</sup> ~~Wilmington~~". Jay Lovestone, former head of American Communist party in a letter to Marshall Windmiller dated July 23, 1956 said -- Roy was a most loyal Stalinist. In many ways Stalin had a terrific hold on him. For years after our expulsion, I differed violently with Roy because of his attitude towards Stalin. When Roy blamed the 127 debate on the Chinese Communist Party, he did so in line with his loyalty to the Comintern, to Kremlin and to Stalin."

100. "The Chinese debacle had resulted from making a fetish of the alliance with the Left Kuomintang." See Haithcox, p. 88. See also - 'Comintern changes course' in Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 101 to 107. 'Communism in India'.

Similarly significant also is the fact that Roy did not see in the China episode any cause to abandon the united policy in India. To him there was a clear distinction between the political situation in China and that which prevailed in India. The CCP - Left Kuomintang alliance had been undermined by 'feudal militarists' group. In the Indian national movement no such group existed. Therefore, even after his recent experience with the Kuomintang (after his return from China), Roy continued to support the four class United Front policy for India. He praised the work of the Workers and Peasants party, and contrasted its accomplishments with the relative inactivity of the CPI. He was of the view that CPI was softened by 'imperialist terror' and the hostility of national bourgeoisie. He was encouraged by the fact that WPP had succeeded in radicalizing the Indian National Congress and penetrating the trade union movement.<sup>101</sup>

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101. See : 'Communism in India', Govt. of India, Home Deptt., pp. 127-128.

See also 'Memoirs', M.N. Roy, pp. 582-585.

On Stalin's death in 1953, Roy wrote  
 "No great war has ever been on angel. Greatness is always produced at the cost of goodness. Stalin did not do anything worse. He certainly deserves a place among the great men of history. Our plea is that some justice should be done to the most maligned man of our time. He deserves justice, because, but for his caution and wisdom, and also his faratical faith in the inevitability of revolution, war might have already undertaken the civilized world. He was the greatest military genius of our time -- Stalin was undoubtedly the tallest personality of our time, and as such is bound to leave his mark on history".

See Overstreet & Windmiller, pp. 142-143.

## CHAPTER IV

### FROM DOGMATISM TO PRAGMATISM (I) :

#### ROY AND THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT.

This chapter deals with the radicalization of Indian politics from 1927 to 1934. It also deals with the interaction between M.N. Roy's ideas and the Indian Nationalist movement during the period.

By 1927, in the Indian National Movement in general and the Congress party in particular, a section was clearly discernible which was anxious for radical socio-economic reforms and sympathetic towards the idea for complete independence. Jawahar Lal Nehru was its chief spokesman then. In 1927, Nehru attended the Congress of oppressed Nationalities at Brussels as the sole representative of the Congress Party. There is little ~~about~~ <sup>doubt</sup> even at the outset that the conference was a, "Communist-inspired and that the organization that emerged from its deliberations, the 'League against Imperialism', was actually a Communist front."<sup>1 and 2</sup>

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1. See - Overstreet and Windmiller Communism in India.
  2. It was suspected, though not at first established, that the League derived its inspiration and a great part of its funds from the Communist International, and the organizers of the League were at special pains to conceal this fact. Evidence which has accumulated (some from Meerut case) makes it perfectly clear that the League is an auxiliary organization of the Communist International over which the Cominter has complete control, and that its functions

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The League according to its statutes was to serve, "as the union, <sup>of</sup> all persons and organizations which disregarding their own particular aims, are prepared to lend support in the struggle against imperialism and for the political and social liberation of all people."<sup>2a</sup> The objectives were broad enough so as to attract a large number of non-communist nationalists. Nehru played an important part in the proceedings of the League and was elected to the organizing committee of the League and later served in its nine-man executive committee.<sup>3</sup> This is not to suggest that Nehru turned into a Marxist, but socialist learnings were clearly seen in his thought then, and henceforth he began to employ socialist phrases. Here Nehru also drafted the Congress resolution on India, expressing the hope that, "the Indian nationalist movement" would <sup>base</sup> ~~base~~ its programme on the fuller emancipation of the peasants and workers of India, without which there can be no freedom."<sup>4</sup> In 1927, Nehru travelled to Moscow

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are to link up the communist movement with national revolutionary movement in the colonies. Till 1931 Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya remained in charge of the International Secretariat of the League.

See - Govt. of India 'Communism in India' Home Deptt., p. 172.

2a. Ibid., and Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 94-95.

3. Ibid.

4. See - Micheal Brecher; Nehru ; A Political Biography, p. 111.

Nehru mentions meeting Roy and Virendra Chattopadhyaya in Moscow, the letter in Berlin, "the only persons I met who impressed me intellectually were V. Chattopadhyaya and M.N. Roy."

See - Autobiography, p. 154.



to attend the 10th Anniversary celebrations of the Bolsheviks Revolution. This short visit (4 days) of the young Nehru made a deep impression on his mind. This is evident from the articles that he wrote on his return, later published in the form of a book entitled 'Soviet Russia'. On his return to India, he attended the Congress Party Session in Madras, where he sponsored many radical resolutions, the most radical was the one which stated (for the first time) that the Congress Party's objective was complete independence rather than 'dominion status', or any other form of relationship with Great Britain.

Nehru also put forward another resolution calling for association with the League against imperialism. A resolution was also adopted on war danger.<sup>5</sup> All <sup>of</sup> Nehru's radical resolutions were adopted. These resolutions represented a radical departure from previous Congress policy. Gandhiji, however, did not attend the Madras Session and he also opposed the independence resolution. Gandhiji's opposition alongwith other old members made the resolution meaningless. Gandhiji said that the, "Congress stultifies itself by repeating year after year resolutions of this character when it knows that it is not capable of carrying them into effect." He was of the view that the Congress has almost sunk to the level of a school boy's debating society.<sup>6</sup>

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5. This resolution, claims Haitheox, was, 'inspired by cominterns then current denunciation of Great Britain for allegedly harboring aggressive designs against Soviet Union'.

See - Haitheox 'Communism and Nationalism in India', pp. 88-89.

6. Ibid.

Radicalization of Indian politics was swift during the year 1928.

Nehru at Madras, had emerged as the leader of the Congress radical.<sup>7</sup> Indian nationalism was beginning to stir in response to the growing unrest and political awareness in the Indian masses and to the radical ideas for social and economic change. In February 1928, the statutory Commission, commonly known as the Simon Commission, arrived in India to take Indian opinion on the question of constitutional reform. It was boycotted by all parties, except by a section of Muslim League under the leadership of Muhammad Shafi.<sup>8</sup> The Simon Commission did not contain a single Indian representative (this was the primary cause of indignation). The Indian leaders felt that they should have a greater voice in shaping their constitution. In fact, the arrival of the Simon Commission was an impetus to the nationalist and anti British feeling. The movement for boycott gained support from all sections of the population.

With the Commission landing there was a nation-wide hartal, and violence broke out in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. "During the remainder of the year, the Commission was an irritant that crystallized much of the growing political consciousness of the masses, and was a wedge that increased the distance between the

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7. Nehru's victory at the Madras Session showed the radicalization of the intelligentsia remarks. Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 124.

8. See - V.P. Menon - 'Transfer of Power in India', p. 35.

conservatives, who were willing to accept eventual dominion status, and the radicals who demanded fuller independence."<sup>9</sup> (although in a nascent form this split was also seen in the Madras Session). This popular hostility towards the commission was certainly an indication of the growing <sup>unrest</sup> assent among the masses. There was evidence in other sectors as well. The peasants in Bombay began a Satyagraha, involving non-payment of taxes. This attracted nation-wide attention and support for many months. Since taxes were reduced as a result of the campaign, this incident made manifest the latent power in organized peasantry.

Roy in 1928, contacted all parties and asked them to issue a declaration saying that the right of framing a constitution belongs exclusively to the Indian people acting through their representatives in a constituent assembly. Haithcox is of the opinion that Roy helped to popularize the slogan of constituent assembly within the congress ranks in the succeeding years. Because of the indignation aroused by the composition of the Simon Commission, the Secretary of State for India asked Indian leaders to give proposals for constitutional reforms upon which all parties would agree. Thus the All India-Parties Conference was held in summer. The task of framing a constitution was delegated to a sub-committee whose chairman was Moti Lal Nehru. The Report that it submitted is known as the Nehru report, it provided for a constitution and 'Dominion Status' for India within the British Commonwealth. In August 1928, the All India

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9. See - Overstreet and Windmiller - 'Communism in India', Chapter 7th, 'The Political Wilderness', pp. 122-127.

Conference was convened to consider the Nehru report envisioning Dominion Status for India. A resolution was put forth saying that 'Dominion Status' was their common objective. The resolution was adopted by the majority but Jawahar Lal Nehru with about 30 others were against this particular resolution. Jawahar Lal Nehru informed the All Parties Conference that he and his group would support the report in the interests of national unity but he also made it clear that, "we propose to carry on such activity as we consider proper and necessary in favour of complete independence."<sup>10</sup> This split in the nationalist ranks led to the establishment of Independence of India League. S. Srinivasa Iyengar<sup>11</sup> was the man behind the League. After his tour of Soviet Union he issued a statement saying that it would be, "suicidal for India to accept Dominion status." Therefore, he joined with Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose in opposing 'Dominion status' and in the formation of The All India Independence for India League (Nov. 1928). In a draft constitution promulgated at its first meeting in Delhi on November 3, 1928 the League defined its objective as, 'the achievement of complete independence for India and reconstruction of Indian society on a basis of social and economic equality', (A resolution for complete independence had already come up in the Madras Session). S. Srinivasa Iyengar was the

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10. See - Nehru on 'War Danger', p. 92.

11. S. Srinivasa Iyengar was President of Congress Party in 1927 at Madras Session because he was opposed to Dominion status therefore, he did not participate in the All Parties Conference in August 1928.

President of the League, Subhas Chandra Bose and J.L. Nehru were Joint Secretaries. Speaking on the New Party, Jawahar Lal Nehru said : "It is a permanent organization with a definite policy and programme. It will cooperate with pleasure with all other organizations which have the same objects in common with it."<sup>12</sup> Thus because of its radical demands attracted young members of the Congress party. It did not, however, have an organizational structure of its own nor a mass following. But till the December Session of the Congress (1929), when the Congress declared complete independence as its goal, the League served as a pressure group within the nationalist movement. The League's programme was political, economic and social Democracy. The League wanted removal of social and economic disparities, nationalization of key industries, abolition of Land Lordism, and a uniform system of land tenure. In short, it wanted the Congress to support and propagate socialist principles and the idea of a socialist state. Therefore, its proposals were most radical ever put forth by an organized nationalist group in Indian Politics till 1928. Its leaders were by and large radical and militant, they viewed Soviet Union with sympathy and accepted many socialist theories. They were also all impatient with ~~the~~ Gandhian approach to independence. And as Overstreet and Windmiller rightly say -- "They preached socialism less militantly than they demanded independence."

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12. See - Michael Brecher - Nehru a Political Biography, pp. 130-133.

The idea of dominion status was opposed by the League because it was felt that on account of racial prejudice prevalent in Great Britain and her dominions full equality with other members of the Commonwealth would be denied and secondly it was felt that India should not associate herself with British Imperialism.<sup>13</sup> Jawahar Lal Nehru insisted that India should not have any relations with the British Empire -- "the British Commonwealth, inspite of its high sounding name, does not stand for international cooperation and its world policy has consistently stood for narrow and selfish ideals and against the peace of the world."<sup>14</sup>

The annual Congress party session was held in Calcutta at the end of the year (1928). Here Moti Lal and other moderates tried to persuade the radical or socialist inclined members of the party. Moti Lal expressed admiration for the idealism of Left wing and their spirit of self sacrifice. But he also advised them that, "You cannot cure exploitation and imperialism out of existence and the way to do it, is a long and dreary one." They (Socialists), he felt, <sup>did</sup> not take into account the party's weaknesses or the strength of the energy. "Idealism divorced from realities had no place in politics, and was a but <sup>a</sup> happy dream which must sooner or later end in a rude awakening." He wanted to

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13. Great Britain, it was said was committed to extending her influence in Asia, whereas India was anxious to free Asia from colonial rule.

14. See - Presidential Address of J.L. Nehru at the Punjabi Provincial Conference of the Congress party held on April 1st, 1928.

offer the foreign oppressor a 'united front' therefore he thought party members should concentrate on minimum goals on which all would agree. But all of Moti Lal Nehru's pleading to minimize the <sup>pressure of</sup> presence of the Left Wing failed. The left wing did not agree. However, a compromise was adopted and a year was given to the British Government to grant 'Dominion Status'. If the British Government did not respond by then the demand for complete independence would be reinstated more rigorously.

It was also decided that organizational work should be taken up amongst the workers and peasants and this was viewed as necessary prelude to the launching of non-cooperation.

Radicalization was not confined to the Congress Party and the nationalist movement. The congress had by and large ignored the Indian Labour Movement.<sup>15</sup> Gandhiji, wanted to avoid as far as possible the mixing of politics with trade-union activity. He was of the view that strikes were conclusive to violence therefore against the principle of Ahimsa. He confined his labour activities to the Ahmedabad Textiles Workers Union (Ahmedabad Textile Workers Union had not joined the AITUC). Although J.L. Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose wanted to channelize the aspirations and grievances into the Nationalist struggle. But it is

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15. The Trade Union Movement was born in India immediately after the war and culminated in July, 1920 in the creation of the All-India Trade Union Congress under the Presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai.  
The Madras Union established in 1918 by Mr. B.P. Wadia, was the first Union.  
See - Masani 'Communism in India', p. 35.

certain that the Congress till then would not visualize the potentiality in the labour movement which could be utilized as a political weapon. The Communists on the other hand did realize it and thus benefitted from the Congress's neglect of the labour movement. We have ~~already~~ noticed that workers and peasants party had already sprung up in Bombay, United Provinces, Punjab and Bengal. The British emissaries especially Spratt, and few Indian Communists were mainly instrumental in it. Although the progress from 1924 to 1927 was not very rapid, because the Kanpur trials had removed some of the most able trade Unionists and at the same time frightened many communists.

After the March 1929 AITUC Session<sup>16</sup> the Communist influence in the labour movement grew tremendously, primarily because the Congress had neglected the field and secondly, because the Communists got the support of the nationalist oriented leaders who were active in the labour movement and who shared the communist's aim of associating the AITUC with the anti British struggle.<sup>17</sup> And thirdly, because of the deplorable conditions in the textile industry and also because of the passing of Trade Union Act 1926 (came into effect from June 1st, 1927) permitted Trade Unionism if registered and these unions were given immunity

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16. Spratt and S.H. Jhabwala, Parsi labour leader also attended the session.

To sprail and Muzaffar Ahmed in due in very great measure the striking success which attached the Communist party during 1928 and the spring of 1929. 'Apratt in particular was everywhere'. See - Govt. of India 'Communism in India,' pp. 119-120.

17. See - V.P. Karnik's quotation, quoted in Haitheox 'Communism and Nationalism in India', p. 98.



from criminal and civil suits for actions taken in furtherance of labour objectives.<sup>18</sup> The Annual Session of AITUC was held in Kanpur on November 26 - 28, 1927. In this sessions many communists were successful in penetrating the organizations. C.F. Andrews and N.M. Joshi (moderate trade Union leaders) were elected President and Secretary respectively. S.H. Thabwala was made organizing secretary, S.A. Dange was made the Assistant Secretary and P.R. Thengdi became one of the three Vice-Presidents. The penetration of communists in AITUC meant its gradual radicalization. This is clearly reflected in the resolutions of the AITUC and its programme. The AITUC soon resolved to boycott the Session Simon Commission resolutions were passed condemning Imperialism as a 'form of capitalist class government' congratulating USSR on its 10th anniversary supporting and sympathizing with the workers and peasants of China, the Government of Bombay was condemned in prosecuting Philip Spratt and congratulated him on his acquittal. A council of action was created for the purpose of organizing a mass movement of the workers and peasants of India. Chaman Lal was elected president, S.H. Jhabwala secretary, Spratt and R.L. Bakhale were chosen to represent the province of Bombay on the Council. As said earlier it was in the Bombay Presidency that Trade Unionism was most successful in the 20's. Primarily because the textile industry was dominant in the area. During the 1st War the cotton industry thrived. Nations engaged in War needed India's raw material. But in 1919, the situation changed, The close of the war resulted in unemployment, the armed forces were

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18. See also portions of Whitely report also quoted in Haitheox p. 99.

demobilized, munition works closed; demand for manufacture goods declined and prices fell. The result was wide spread strikes throughout 1920 and 1921. The Bombay Mill industry was characterized by competition, inefficiency and severe competition from Japanese producers. In 1925, the Bombay Mill owners' association sought to reduce wages by 11½ percent (as a measure to cut production costs). This resulted in a 3 month strike, which however was resolved in favour of workers. Again in 1927 (because of World Market conditions) the Indian cotton manufacturer found it necessary to reduce production cost. Thus, they asked spinners to operate more looms in return for a small compensatory increase in wages besides a large number of workers were retrenched.<sup>19</sup>

It was this situation in the textile industry which the Communists exploited to the advantage. In 1926, N.M. Joshi and R.L. Bakhale founded the Bombay Textile Labour Union. In January 1927, the Workers and Peasant Party was formed to promote the nascent labour movement. In 1928, the Sassoon Group of cotton mills announced the introduction of a rationalization plan (it meant introduction of more efficient methods of production, in order to increase output per worker and a reduction of total work force) this resulted in a strike. The strike, however, failed because N.M. Joshi and Bombay Textile Labour Union did not join it, in fact opposed it, although members of the workers and

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19. The number of persons employed in Bombay Cotton Mills declined during 1927-1928, from 145,000 to 118,500. See - V.B. Karnik 'Indian Trade Union', p. 38. In May 1927, 'Krantī', a Marathi Language paper of W.P.P. began publication.

peasants party took active part in the strike. In April 1928, the owners of Currimbhoy Ebrahim and Sons announced the introduction of rationalization schemes. This gave the Communists a good opportunity. On April 10th, the Workers and Peasants Party called for a strike. A strike Committee was formed to coordinate the strike. The strike Committee comprised of representatives of Girni Kamgar Mahamandel (a cotton Mill), the Bombay Mill Workers Union (Bombay Mill Workers Union was formed because J.H. Jhabwala and his supporters did not agree with N.M. Joshi and his moderate followers who were dominant in Bombay Textile Labour Union), Bombay. Worker and peasants party and non Union Mill workers.<sup>20</sup>

On 23rd April police firing killed one and several others were injured, with the effect that on April 24th the strike committee proclaimed a general strike of all Cotton Mills in Bombay. In May, the moderate wing of the trade Union also joined the strike (Bombay Textile Labour Union). The Communists during the strike gained control of Girni Kamgar Mahamandel and joined it with Jhabwala's newly formed Bombay Mill Workers Union. This re-constituted Union was now known as Girni Kamgar Union and registered on 23rd May 1928, A.V. Alve became President, Dange Secretary. During the first few months of the strike G.K.U. membership rose from 324 to 54,000. V.B. Karnik in 'Indian Trade Union' quotes the figure as 70,000. This figure is certainly an exaggeration, but it is certain that G.K.U.

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20. These facts and figures are from the Bombay Gazette, quoted in Haithcox, p. 102.

became in a few months the largest Union in India. The strike continued for six months (ended October 4th). The Government of Bombay appointed a Committee to inquire into the conditions of the labour (Fawcett Committee). Pending the report of the Committee, workers returned, but there was neither a reduction of wages nor introduction of rationalization schemes.

This growing unrest among the industrial proletariat was not confined to Bombay. It was seen among the textile workers of Sholapur and Kanpur and among the Steel Workers in Jamshedpur and Jute Workers in Calcutta. During this period Railwaymen's Union was organized (Jhabwala became General Secretary and Bradley Vice-President, Joglekar as Organizing Secretary) by 1929 it had a membership of 41,000.<sup>21</sup>

The AITUC held its 9th opening session at Jharia, on December 18th to 20th, 1928. The opening session was addressed by J.W. Johnstone representative of the League against Imperialism. He was, however, arrested after the opening session. The Communists in this session wanted to capture the AITUC, thus they put up a candidate for presidency - D.B. Kulkarni (a Railway Clerk). The moderates to check the communists sponsored the candidature of J.L. Nehru. Nehru won, but only by a narrow margin. Kulkarni and Muzaffar Ahmed became Vice-Presidents, Dange was chosen as one of the two Assistant Secretaries and Thengdi, Bradley and Spratt were elected to the ten men Executive Committee. The Jharia Sessions reflected the growing

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21. See - Bombay Gazette, 1928-1929, quoted in Haitheox, p. 102, 104.

strength of the Communists in the labour movement, so did the resolutions of the sessions. It condemned imperialism, Johnstones arrest, it also decided to affiliate with the league against imperialism for a period of one year. Nearly all public utility services and industries in the Bombay Presidency in particular and the country in general had been affected by the new wave of radicalism, which swept the country during the year. "Transport, industrial and agricultural workers of every description, clerks, policemen, colliers and even scavengers were amongst the many who were subjected to, if they did not fall under the baneful influence of this whirlwind propaganda campaign which promised them the sweets of revolution if they would but raise their hands to grasp them."<sup>22</sup> Spratt and Muzaffar Ahmed were mainly responsible for the tremendous gains of the Dominists during 1928 and early 1929."Spratt in particular was ubiquitous. He worked in 1927 mainly with the Bombay group, in 1928 with the Bengal Party. He played a large part in uniting the Punjab groups into one party and in the formations of those in the United Provinces into another. And all the time he was carrying on correspondence with the conspirators on the continent and in England, informing them of the progress of the work, discussing difficulties, receiving instructions. Second only to him was Muzaffar Ahmed, who, however autocratic he may have been, managed by voluminous correspondence to keep in touch not only with the workers abroad but also with all the other workers in India and saw to it that none was idle."<sup>23</sup>

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22. See - 'Communism in India', Home Deptt., p. 120.

23. Ibid., p. 119.

Mention also should be made of B.F. Bradley, -- the strikes in Bombay in 1928 would certainly not have reached the pitch they had, if it had not been for the advice and active encouragement which B.F. Bradley gave to the Indian collaborators. Evidence in the Meerut case shows that he took an active interest as a "Communist fraction" in a number of Unions and that he took an active part in the organization and conduct of the textile strike and in the formation of Unions of Port trust and railway employees, municipal workers, oil workers and transport workers in Bengal as well. He came to India with the claim that, "the only way out of the present day world economic crisis is the revolutionary way -- capitalism must be smashed and socialism build upon the ruins there of" -- he later admitted in the sessions court that, "all his activities had been in accordance with this theory."<sup>24</sup>

By the end of 1928 the extremists (as represented in W.P.P.) had to a large extent controlled the trade union activity, particularly in Bombay Presidency. The influence of the moderates was fast declining. Strikes were being fomented and the oft repeated policy : "First disturb the masse's placid contentment and then inculcate the principle of communism" -- was being pursued with vigour under the guidance of European emissaries and trained indigenous workers. In short during the strike of 1928-29 the workers of India emerged as a 'political force', a development of great significance, and took an active

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24. Ibid., p. 121.

part in nation-wide struggle for independence. "A new milestone was thus reached, the workers had realized for the first time their revolutionary role among the various forces of national emancipation."<sup>25</sup> This effort at radicalization was not <sup>confined</sup> to the industrial worker and peasants, even the youth of all classes were to be "harnessed to Communist Car of destruction, and a net work of study classes made its appearance with the object of training leaders from rank and file. J.V. Ghatge (S.V. Ghatge did best work for the CPI in a secretarial capacity) in 1928 said that "the work under youth section is conducted in the form of classes in which students have been taking part". Although the CPI did not meet much success in this direction, yet Spratt assisted by Dharani Goswami, P.C. Joshi and others had laid by great pains a youth movement and this included a youth section of the workers and peasants party known as the 'Young Comrades League'. To this youth organization Jawahar Lal Nehru lend a ready hand. Speaking at the Bombay Presidency Youth Conference held at Poona on December 12, 1928 he said, "We must aim at the destruction of all imperialism, and the reconstruction of society on another basis. That basis must be one of cooperation, which is another name of socialism. Our national ideal must, therefore, be the establishment of a co-operative socialist commonwealth and our international ideal a world federation of socialist states. The voice that claims

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25. See - M.R. Masani, 'The Communist Party of India', pp. 35-36.  
 See - also 'Communism and India', Govt. of India, Home Deptt., p. 125, particularly 129 alone.

freedom must be a voice of revolt. When the voice is raised, England will bow to the inevitable." In the same speech at another place he said, "so long therefore, as the world is not perfect, a healthy society must have the seeds of revolt in it. It must alternate between revolution and consideration. It is the function of youth to supply this dynamic element in society."<sup>26</sup>

As stated earlier that Roy's efforts made much contributions towards the development of a revolutionary movement in India in the 20's. The Meerut trials (March 1929 to 1933) provide testimony that he had successfully raised a band of devoted Communists in India, who had established their influence over the workings classes.<sup>27</sup> Besides his writings -- "One year of non-cooperation, 'India in Transition' and 'Future of Indian Politics', not only introduced 'Marxism' among Indian intellectuals but were instrumental in radicalizing a sizable section of the Indian National Congress, particularly the group led by J.L. Nehru. On the whole the national climate was in a mood to appease the radicals as there was considerable dissatisfaction with Gandhi's methods. The session of the All India National Congress which was convened in Calcutta in December 1928, reflected this pandering spirit.

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26. See - 'Communism in India', Home Deptt., pp. 120-126.

See also Nehru's Collection of Speeches.

27. See - Govt. of India, Home Deptt., - British Intelligence Report, pp. 135-138 also p. 127.



Resolutions were passed condemning the Public Safety Bill and Trader's dispute Bill which were then ready for legislation. At this session it was also decided that the 'Congress' should take up the organization of workers and peasants, "as a part of its future programme of constructive work for non-cooperation. While the session was on, 30,000 labourers marched in procession 'with red banners and took possession of the enclosure in spite of the protests of the Congress leaders.'<sup>28</sup> This incident was symbolic not only of the communists hostility to non-violent nationalism, but also of the enormous increase in the influence and power of the working classes under communist direction. In the nationalist movement socialist ideas were gaining currency. But in the following years the Communists could not sustain their initial gains. They failed to take advantage of the anti colonial sentiment that had been unleashed. The tremendous success that had met them in the labour field could not be sustained. In fact the following years can aptly be described as a period of 'degeneration'.<sup>29</sup> In a national climate in which anti-colonial sentiment was high and nationalistic forces having been released the radical programme of the Communists could have advanced very rapidly, or we could say the climate and temper of the nation was awaiting to be infused with radicalism. But paradoxically the

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28. See - Govt. of India, Home Deptt., 1935, p. 127.  
 See also L.P. Sinha, 'The left wing in India', pp. 231, 232 and 234.  
 29. See - Govt. of India, Home Deptt., p. 158.

the Communist influence and strength decline considerably. The reasons are not far to seek. Much of the blame can be attributed to the new line of thinking <sup>to</sup> be pursued by the Comintern after the 6th Cominter Congress. Secondly, there was much fractionalism and confusion ~~also~~ within the communist party's rank and file in India, as to the correct approach.<sup>30</sup> Besides the British Government strengthened its anti communist drive.

Roy did not see in the failure of the Chinese revolution any cause to abandon the united front policy in India. For him there was a clear distinction between the political situation that prevailed in China and that which prevailed in India ; "The lessons of these revolutionary and counter revolutionary events in China are that the nationalist bourgeoisie in the colonial and semi-colonial countries are essentially counter revolutionary; that the national revolution to be successful must be agrarian revolution; that not only big bourgeoisie, but also petty bourgeoisie; inspite of their radical phrases, cannot and will not lead the agrarian revolution, that the petty bourgeoisie when placed in power by the support of the workers and peasants do not share or depend this power with

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30. See : G.D. Overstreet and M. Windmiller - Communism in India - Chapter 'Political Wilderness', pp. 122-175.  
 See also Masani - The Communist Party of India, p. 41.  
 "For the first time peasants, clerks, students & housewives faced the policemen's baton and went cheerfully to prison out of love of their country and its freedom ... the record of the Indian Communists during the period ... makes queer reading ... ." They were no where to be found in this revolutionary framework. pp. 41-42.  
 See also L.P. Sinha 'Left wing in India', pp. 231-233.

the working class, but hand it over to the counter revolutionary bourgeoisie, and the working class operating through their independent political party (Communist Party) is the only guarantee for the success of the revolution."<sup>31</sup>

The 'Indian National Congress', was a bourgeoisie organization with petty bourgeoisie leadership therefore it cannot be relied upon. Roy, therefore, was suggesting to unite all the progressive forces in order to capture the leadership of the Congress party. In other words, Roy thought that a 'United Front' policy was suited for India. According to Roy the CCP Left Kuomintang alliance had been undermined by feudal militarist group, a group which had no counterpart in India. Therefore, according to Roy the Chinese situation was different from the Indian situation. But in the Comintern there was a lot of confusion regarding the line that should be pursued in India. Many Indian communists also did not agree with Roy's approach.<sup>32</sup>

The Sixth World Congress of the Comintern took a sharp turn to the left. The line that was being pursued towards

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<sup>31</sup>. See - "The lessons of the Chinese Revolution", quoted in Overstreet and Windmiller, Communism in India, p. 102.

<sup>32</sup>. Saumupendranath Tagore, leader of the Bengal W.P.P. was of the view that Roy had misappropriated funds and had put before the Comintern an exaggerated picture of Communist Movement in India.  
See, 'Historical Development of the Communist Movement in India' by Saumupendranath Tagore, pp. 10-12.  
See also Govt. of India, Home Deptt., 1935, pp. 113-114.

India since the second Congress of the Comintern was drastically changed after the sixth Congress of the Comintern. Gandhi to whom Lenin had attributed a revolutionary role was henceforth to be regarded as a reactionary force. This new line of thinking which implied a sharp turn towards the left had been advocated by Roy at the Second Congress of the Comintern and subsequent Congresses.<sup>33</sup> But it <sup>was</sup> rejected by the Comintern then. Now Roy was of a different view point. In fact, he had changed his views regarding India before leaving for China. He was of the view that a United Front policy was suited for India. The W.P.P. was intencioned for the purpose. The decisions of the 6th Congress of the Comintern, in which India occupied a prominent place, had a tremendous impact on the Communist movement in India. It was followed by a period of political degeneration. The Sixth Congress of the Comintern, as Gautam Chattopadhyaya rightly says, was one step forward and two steps backward.

### The Sixth Comintern Congress

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern was held in Moscow from July 17 to September 11, 1928. It was attended by 532 delegates from 57 parties and organizations. Communist and Workers parties from all over the World were represented at the Congress. The Congress discussed the following basic questions : report of the E.C.C.I., Programme of the Communist International, means of combating the danger of imperialist

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33. See , Second Congress of the Comintern, already referred.

wars; the revolutionary movement in the colonies and semi colonies and the economic situation in U.S.S.R.<sup>34</sup> We shall only be concerned with the revolutionary movement in colonies and semi colonies. In order to understand the controversy, it is essential to go back a little.

At the 6th Plenum of the ECCI (February 17 to March 15, 1926) it was reported that the general economic situation in the capitalist countries was one of 'tottering stabilization'.<sup>35</sup> It was also maintained that because of the elective of British capital the native capitalism was being strengthened. On the other hand, it was also pointed out their economic concessions limited as they were to a small section of the Indian bourgeoisie would not imply political concessions. In fact, these would lead to a policy of further political oppression. Later in the year the Seventh Plenum was held. In this Roy expressed the same point of view. Britain according to him was not in a position to export capital, therefore in such advanced colonies as India had to adopt a new policy which called for the development and utilization of inner capital resources. He was of the view that the British thought such utilization of the capital resources of the colonies would stabilize British capital at home and prevent British empire from collapsing. Roy predicted that this policy would only postpone for the time being the collapse of the empire, because India was so

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34. See ; 'Outline History of the Communist International', pp. 273 & 283 to 287.

35. Ibid., pp. 232-238.

rich in potential wealth that eventually money would be available for export. In simple words, it implied that if British export capital continued to decline as it was it would be rather difficult to maintain political control.<sup>36 & 37</sup>

In 1927, when Roy was in China Saumyendranath Tagore came to Moscow and submitted a report to the ECCI, on the economic situation in India. He clearly said that the modern industry in India was developing while this point was being debated in the ECCI. Bukharin said that this would imply that a process of 'decolonization' had begun, and if so a <sup>Commission</sup> ~~communism~~ should be appointed to examine it. Hugh P. Rathbore started collecting material for such a project. Roy on his return from China was asked to draft a statement on the basis of the work done by Rathore and the Commission. The draft was prepared and left there. Roy also claims that it was never formally accepted.<sup>3</sup> It was as the author of this document that Roy was condemned at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. In this document he

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36. See : Resolution on the situation in Great Britain 'Outline History of the Communist International', pp. 262 to 270. See also Overstreet and Windmiller 'Communism in India', pp. 101 to 109.

For detailed discussion at the Seventh Plenum see pp 246 to 249. 'Outline History of Communist International.' At this Plenum, Zinoviev and Trotsky brought against the C.P.S.U. the charge of narrow nationalism. They denied the possibility of socialism being up in USSR without 'direct state support from the protectariat in the west'. However, ideologically and politically they were defeated and Zinoviev was relieved of his duties.

37. Roy said : "The little child that Britain is nursing may begin to kick before long."

38. See : M.N. Roy "Our Differences", pp. 29-30.

had used the phase 'decolonization' meaning by it a process of gradual industrialization which might lead to domin<sup>ion</sup> status; "the implication of the new policy is gradual 'decolonization' of India which would be allowed eventually to evolve out of the status of 'dependency' to 'dominion status.'"<sup>39</sup> The unavoidable process of decolonization has in it the germs of the destruction of the empire.<sup>39</sup> The theory was not new but the presentation with the emphasis on economic political equation and its implication was. It implied that rapid industrialization had created a manufacturing bourgeoisie in India which found itself competing with the imperialists in exploiting the masses. The manufacturing bourgeoisie by threatening to side with the masses demanded concessions from the Imperialists. Frightened by this revolutionary situation they granted concessions. Thus this new manufacturing class or new bourgeoisie was in a sense running their own affairs, therefore he used 'decolonization'. But it was also clear that decolonization would only benefit the native bourgeoisie not the masses. The point that Roy wanted to emphasize was that the native bourgeoisie could no longer <sup>cooperate</sup> to the struggle for national freedom; "It is no longer a revolutionary force not only from the point of view of the internal conditions in India, but from the point of view of the present world condi-

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39. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

NOTE: The word "Decolonization" was first used by Bukharin, later on it was associated with Roy's name and he was charged and dismissed.

NOTE E: Hugh P. Rathore, was a member of C.P.G.B. and was present in Moscow during the 7th Plenum.

tions also the Indian bourgeoisie is rallied on the side of counter revolution. It cannot and does not lead or participate in the struggle for national freedom. Indian National Revolution has passed its bourgeoisie stage. It must still realize a programme which objectively and historically is the programme of bourgeoisie revolution but it is no longer a bourgeois revolution, because it can and will succeed only by breaking the bonds of capitalist society.<sup>40</sup> In other words, he meant that bourgeoisie cannot be an ally of revolution. Therefore, it was necessary to unite all progressive forces in an effort to capture the leadership of the Congress party which was essentially a bourgeois party.

In 1928, writing in the International Press Correspondence Roy expresses doubt about India achieving dominion status through constitutional means. He now makes a clear distinction between economic concessions leading to 'industrialization or decolonization' and political concessions leading to 'dominion status'. In other words imperialist policy may lead to economic concessions but not necessarily political concessions in fact he thought it might lead to political repression.<sup>41</sup>

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40. See : 'Role of Bourgeoisie in National Revolution', Masses of India - Nov. 1927. Referred in Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 103. By M.N. Roy.

41. See : M.N. Roy. 'Our Differences', pp. 31 to 33.  
"... more than a parliamentary fight must take place before even self Govt. within the Empire is granted, p. 33.



At the Plenum of the ECCI (Feb. 1928) the Comintern Economist Eugene Varga put forward the thesis that Great Britain was now attempting to arrest the industrial growth in India. Varga was of the view that during the war British policy was for long range industrialization. It was, however, an expedient pursued because of certain war time conditions. But now Britain viewed India merely as a source of raw materials and as a market for British export industries. To support his new thesis he quoted figures which showed that British capital exported to India since 1929 showed a decline.<sup>42</sup> The thesis of Varga was not acceptable to the Indian Commission. In the Comintern meetings of March-April 1928, it was openly challenged by the members of the Indian delegation more particularly the British members, they acknowledged that there was a decline of the British capital exported to India but contended that it was due to economic depression resulting from the reorganization of industries in Great Britain and restoration of Gold standard. Therefore this arrest of capital export reflected a temporary deflection rather than a temporary change in British policy towards India. R. Palme Dutta writing in the

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42. See ; 'International Press Correspondence', March 1927, This issue carried a long article by Varga ; "Economics and Economic Policy in the Fourth Quarter of 1927. Half the article dealt with 'India focus of the British Empire', referred in Haitheox, p. 113. See also 'Outline History of Communist International' - The Sixth Congress, pp. 272 to 285, particularly pp. 283 and 284.

'labour' monthly in June 1928, further elaborated the idea :  
 "To-day we are faced with a noticeable arrest in the development of the policy, there is a noticeable hardening against concessions and conciliations towards Indian bourgeoisie."<sup>43</sup>  
 But he was firm that this did not mean no industrialization in India. "The whole character of British policy of industrialization in India is to secure industrialization under British control. From what is going on at present we can build with confidence on our diagnosis of the continuing capitalist and industrialized evolution of India, with accompanying political ~~political~~ revolutionizing consequences and in particular on the growth, both in numbers and in consciousness of the industrial proletariat, alongside the intensifying agrarian crisis."<sup>44</sup> In support of their view CPGB cited the 1922 Fiscal Commission Report. The report had emphasized that industrial<sup>ization</sup> in India would be much advantageous since it would lead to the creation of new sources of wealth and enlargement of public revenues. The creation of Agricultural Commission in 1926 was a corollary to this permanent British Policy.<sup>45</sup> Its purpose was to raise agricultural productivity by the introduction of modern agricultural methods and to provide an expanded home market for further industrial development.<sup>46</sup>

43. See : 'Communism in India' - Overstreet and Windmiller, p.108.  
 See also - 'Socialism and Communism in India', Sankar Ghose, pp. 298 to 300.

44. Ibid., pp. 107-108.

Note: Varga had argued that the creation of the Agricultural Commission was a move counter to the policy of Industrialization.

45. See : Labour Monthly (6) 1928 referred in Haitheox, p. 114.

46. See : Overstreet and Windmiller 'Communism in India', pp. 108-109.

See also R.P. Dutt, 'Modern India', p. 17.

The lengthy debate on industrialization before, during and after the 6th Congress of the Cominter was not an end in itself, it was to solve the main question that is -- what should be the relationship of the Communists towards the Indian National Congress. R.P. Dutta conceded that after the collapse of the non cooperation movement the Indian bourgeoisie was becoming clearly counter revolutionary but its role in the national struggle had not yet been exhausted though limited in its scope by it, "fear and hostility towards any mass revolutionary movement therefore very dangerous to the real struggle against Imperialism. It becomes the task of the mass movement to exploit to the maximum the opportunities presented by the bourgeoisie resistance as in the boycott of the Simon Commission but under independent leadership."<sup>47</sup> However, Dutta found some hope in the petty bourgeoisie who he thought might infuse revolutionary spirit in the national movement in the future.<sup>48</sup>

The Sixth Comintern Congress met on July 17, 1928. ECCI's main spokesman was Kussiner. In his speech he incorporated Varga's economic analysis.<sup>49</sup> He conceded that during 1921-23 about a quarter of British export had gone to India but this flow according to him had fallen drastically in the years that followed. Even then (1921-23) he said, "only 10% was invested

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47. See ; 'Labour Monthly', June 1928 - referred in Sanker Ghose's - Socialism and Communism in India, p. 299.

48. Ibid. See also Communism in India, Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 108-109.

49. Otto V. Kussiner had recently been appointed to the ECCI to speak on the colonies. He had neither specialized knowledge of the subject nor India.

directly in Indian industry and that too was in the form of Government loans." Kunsinen attacked the views of Roy, R.P. Dutt and Hugh Rathore on British economic policy : " ... Imperialism retards the industrialization of the colonies and prevents the full development of their productive forces. The basic tendency of the imperialists policy towards the colonies was to preserve and heighten their dependence. All the chatter of the imperialists and their lackeys about the policy of 'decolonization' being carried through by the imperialist powers, about promotion of the free development of the colonies, reveals itself as nothing but an imperialistic. It is of the utmost importance that communists both in the imperialist countries and in the colonial countries should expose this lie."<sup>50</sup> Considering the role of the bourgeoisie he said : "that the national bourgeoisie is raising a hue and cry is quite true. But it is important to understand the political character of the Indian bourgeoisie, its national reformist policy. That this policy is directed against the bourgeoisie is as plain as that the bourgeoisie is bourgeois. The policy of the Indian bourgeoisie is not revolutionary is also quite clear."<sup>51</sup> On the question of Worker's and Peasant's Party he said : "For a time, some comrades considered the advisability of the 'Labour and Peasant Parties' as a substitute for such organizational forms as 'Communist Parties'.

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50. See ; 'International Press Correspondence', Vol. 8, Nov. 1928, referred in Outline History of Communist Interaction' Moscow. 1971. pp. 284-285.

51. See ; 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 114 & 115.

It is now clearer than before that this form is not to be recommended, especially in colonial and semi colonial countries. It would be an easy matter for the labour peasant parties to transform themselves into petty bourgeoisie parties, to get away from the communists, thereby failing to help them to come in contact with the masses. To consider such parties as a substitute for a real Communist Party, would be a serious mistake." He clearly pointed out that "we are for a block with the peasantry but will have nothing to do with the fusion of various classes."<sup>52</sup> During the debate following Kunsinen's report a dispute arose on the question of imperialists role in the colonies. A number of speakers while attacking 'decolonization', equated it with the social Democratic belief in the progressive and liberating role of imperialism in the colonies. This implied that as a result of the British economic policy a gradual progressive modernization of Indian economy was taking place which would raise the standard of living of the Indian people. The rise in the standard of living "would gradually encroach upon the margin of 'super profit', until imperialist exploitation ceased to exist." Thus the theory of decolonization was interpreted as justify-

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52. See ; O.V. Kunsinen 'Revolutionary movement in the Colonies - referred in Overstreet and Windmiller, Communism in India, p. 115.  
See also 'Sixth Congress of the Comintern' in Outline History of Communist International, pp. 183-286.

ing imperialist policy in the colonies.<sup>53</sup> Kunsiner strongly attacked such a theory of 'Gradualism'. He made it clear that the basic tendency of the imperialist policy towards the colonies was to preserve and heighten their dependence. Decolonization he said, "should not be allowed to stand as it would have a reactionary influence" on the nationalist movement in the colonies.<sup>54</sup>

The entire British delegation except for J.T. Murphy attacked Kunsiner's views. D. Petrovsky (alias A.T. Bernet) denied that decolonization had any relationship with the theory of social Democrats. "I prefer to speak", he said, "about 'decolonization' rather than to join in the description of India as a village hinterland of British Empire". Kunsener's thesis he said, "does not seem true looking at the widespread industrial unrest in India, involving thousands of workers."<sup>55</sup> Kunsener had referred to India during the debate as an agrarian appendage of the capitalist cities. Petrovsky remarked that if India was an agrarian appendage there would be no

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53. A- See : 'M.N. Roy A study of Revolution and Reason in Indian Politics' By D.C. Grover, pp. 20-21.

B- See also 'Outline History of Communist International', pp. 283-86.

The possibility of Imperialism having a progressive and liberating effect on the colonies was put forward at the time of the Second (1889) International at Brussels and was adopted. In fact Bernstein had first spoken of such a probability. The social Democratic theory gained much currency on the continent in the 20th century. Stalin however, was against the Social Democrats and their theories e.g., gradualism.

54. See : Outline History of Communist International, pp. 283-86.

55. See : International Press Correspondence, Nov. 1928.  
See also - Outline History of Communist International, pp. 285-286.

prospect for the development of class struggle. He also depended British and Indian delegates by acknowledging that decolonization stands for 'Industrialization' and not for a process of withdrawal. Though Petrovsky attacked the views of Varga and Kunsenin but he supported the views of Stalin regarding the bourgeoisie. The India bourgeoisie he said had no revolutionary role to play. "Everyone", he said, "who speaks of any shadow of a possibility of the national bourgeoisie playing any positive active role in the nationalist revolution is spreading illusions."<sup>56</sup>

Clemens Dutt summarized the British view point by saying that it was neither the policy of Great Britain to industrialize India rapidly nor to keep her in economic bondage. He was of the view that development of capitalist industry was inevitable and the British seeks to control it in such a way as to receive maximum control. The Indian bourgeoisie, he agreed, was counter revolutionary but thought that it could still be used in the development of mass revolution.<sup>57</sup> He thus suggested the attitude that should be taken by the Indian Communists towards the Indian National Congress. He was also opposed to the dismissal of 'Workers and Peasants' parties. He thought that they (WPP) were helping the Communists to broaden their base by going to the Masses. Writing about the

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56. Ibid. Petrovsky further in the same article referring to the imperialist powers said ; "The leech does not withdraw its suckers till it is forced from the body of the victim."

57. Clemens Dutt was the official representative of India but he was also a leading member of CPGB.

WPP Clemens Dutt says : " ... The characteristic feature of the Worker's and Peasant's Parties in the development in India is that they are forming an important route through which Communists are finding their way to the masses."<sup>58</sup>

In short, the Russian delegates wanted to liquidate the WPP as they thought it cannot develop into a party of mass national struggle, unless it able to free itself from the influence of bourgeois politicians, the ECCI similarly held that WPP cannot be a substitute for the Communist Party, an organization it thought is a must.

The Indian delegates<sup>59</sup> were not unanimous in their attitude. On the question relating to the WPP, Mohammed Usmani, Habib Ahmed Wasim and Raza told the ECCI line, that is they wanted to liquidate the WPP. Usmani said, "the WPP exists owing to the wrong tactics and instructions of the Comintern."<sup>60</sup> Elaborating on the subject he said : "We must criticize the policy of the Comintern in conducting the organization of the Workers and Peasants' Parties while altogether ignoring the organization of the CPI. This is just as absurd as putting the cart before the horse."<sup>61</sup> Tagore was rather radical in

58. See : International Press Correspondence, Oct. 1928.

59. The Indian delegation consisted of the following: Shaukat Usmani, Saumyendra Nath Tagore, C. Dutt, G.A.K. Luhani, Mohammed Shafique, Habib Ahmed Nasim, and Masood Ali Shah. Interesting to note that the credentials of all were doubtful as none was the official delegate of CPI. See L.P. Sinha 'Left Wing in India', pp. 209-210 and also Tagore - "Historical development of the Communist Movement in India", p. 14.

60. International Press Correspondence (Nov. 1928).

61. Ibid.



his views. He was against the idea of even having 'temporary agreements' with the Indian national bourgeoisie. The Indian national bourgeoisie he thought had no revolutionary programme. The Comintern later thought on the same lines. However, Tagore defended the WPP. He acknowledged that WPP cannot be a substitute for the CPI but thought that the Workers and Peasants Parties were essential in order to utilize the energies of the petty bourgeoisie. In the International Press Correspondence, defending the WPP he writes ; "... . The petty bourgeoisie elements in the country who have been proletarianized are sometimes more proletarian than the proletariat themselves. The petty bourgeois intelligentsia, the urban petty bourgeoisie, have to play a rôle in the revolutionary movement in the colonies. What should be the organizational expression of the anti-imperialist front of the petty bourgeois elements? Can we afford to swamp the Communist Party with such petty bourgeois elements? We cannot. On the other hand, the Communist Party of India should utilize the revolutionary energies of the petty bourgeoisie. I think it is clear that this anti-imperialist front can only take the organizational form of a Workers' and Peasants' Party composed of the urban intelligentsia and the petty bourgeois elements under the leadership of the proletariat. We have been able to take over some trade unions from the reformist leadership, to organize peasant unions. This is pure and simple professional dogmatism against which Lenin had warned us to many times."<sup>62</sup> Tagore also objected to the

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62. Ibid.

controlling influence of the CPGB in India. Though he agreed that the proletarian revolution was linked up in both countries, but this in no way implied that CPI leadership should be subordinate to the leadership of the Imperialist home country.<sup>63</sup> Shaukat Usmani not only criticised Roy but simultaneously supported Stalin on every issue connected with colonial policy. For instance, he approved Varga's thesis, attacked decolonization and was in favour of liquidating WPP. The Workers and Peasants Parties according to him had already fallen into the hands of Philanthropic petty bourgeoisie. He wanted the Comintern to organize a strong Communist Party. Referring to Roy he said, "Comrades who have been here for about ten years cannot properly deal with the situation."<sup>64</sup>

The charges and criticisms levelled by the British delegates compelled Kunsinen to acknowledge that his thesis contained errors of a fundamental nature. He acknowledged that British delegates had differentiated their position from the Social Democrats. But towards Roy he made no concessions and bluntly accused him as a 'Lackey of Imperialism'.<sup>65</sup> Kunsinen, henceforth, did not deny the development of native

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63. See : 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 117.

Roy also did not approve of the CPGB playing the leading role in India affairs.

64. Ibid.

For the views of CPGB see also Sinha 'Left Wing in India', pp. 218-219.

65. See : M.N. Roy, 'Our Differences', p. 27.

capitalism but said, "it was an undesired by product of imperialist exploitation, which had occurred inspite of the hampering tendencies on the part of imperialism." He further said that the Indian national bourgeoisie had not completely gone into the opposition but a large section was drawing close to the camp of counter revolution. As unanimity could not be reached therefore a commission was appointed to further examine the question.<sup>66</sup> It submitted its report in 10 days. Portions dealing with tactical questions had been amended to apply to China, India, Egypt and Indonesia. The commission according to Kunsiner had been in complete agreement with the former draft concerning the character of imperialist colonial policy.<sup>67</sup> The Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi Colonies as finally adopted maintains -- that the British imperialism had returned to its policy of hindering the industrial development of India. It strongly condemned decolonization.<sup>68</sup> This final thesis favoured a three class strategy for India, behind this perhaps was the assumption that Indian revolution had reached a agrarian stage. It is absolutely clear that the failure of the 'Chinese Revolution' was the dominant factor behind the new Comintern Colonial policy. In the case of China it was observed that the alliance of the 'Communists' with the 'Left Koumintang' benefitted the left Kuomintang cause rather

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66. See ; Otto, V. Kunsiner, 'Report of the Colonial Commission,' referred in Haitheox's book 'Communism and Nationalism in India', p. 121.

67. Ibid.

68. See ; 'Outline History of Communist International', pp. 285.

than the communists. Since this alliance had failed in China it was bound to fail in India, where political class consciousness was even less developed. (on account of little industrialization). Although a complete break with the nationalist parties was not suggested because nationalist movement in India was still a typical bourgeois-nationalist movement. Therefore, the poor peasantry, urban petty bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie intelligentsia were for the time being said to be allies of the proletariat. In other words, the above mentioned were assigned revolutionary roles alongwith the proletariat.<sup>69</sup> The trading bourgeoisie along with feudal landlords were described as dependers of foreign rule. The remaining portions of the bourgeoisie, "reflects the interests of the native industry, manifests a special vacillating compromising tendency which may be designated as national reformism."<sup>70</sup> This statement though ambiguous meant that the bourgeois although it compromised with imperialism, "but could not abandon the nationalist movement because the dangers of class revolution have as yet not become immediate and menacing."<sup>71</sup>

Looking back, we may say ~~conclude~~ that the new line adopted by the 6th Congress of the Comintern reflects a compromise to a certain extent. Stalin and his supporters wanted a shift towards the left and Bukharin wanted that no drastic change

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69. See ; 'Outline History of Communist International', pp. 285-286.

70. Ibid. See also Sinha - 'Left Wing in India', p. 217.

71. See ; 'Communism and Nationalism in India', by Haitheox, pp. 122.

should be made. As the Stalin group had become more powerful within the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern also the shift towards the left is clearly seen. It also appears that Stalin in the light of the failure of the Chinese revolution wanted to avoid national reformist tendencies gaining an upper hand, therefore the Indian Communists were advised to, "concentrate their efforts on organising a single, illegal, independent and centralized Party. It is necessary to reject any kind of formation of bloc between Communist Party and national-reformist opposition."<sup>72</sup> The Communists were advised to criticize the halfheartedness and vacillation of the petty bourgeois groups including the left wing of the Indian National Congress. Although any kind of bloc with the nationalist organizations was rejected but at the same time a sectarian policy was not recommended as it might, "lead to the isolation of the Communists with the toiling masses." It was thought Indian nationalist leaders were still playing a revolutionary role (opposing Foreign rule) therefore Communists were advised, "to utilize every conflict and broaden their significance."<sup>73</sup> In other words, the line advised was itself vacillating -- that to take advantage of the nationalist struggle and at the same time to conduct a relentless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois nationalism.

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern, in the history of Communist movements throughout the world signals the beginning

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72. See ; 'Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in Colonies and semi colonies' in Sinha 'Left Wing in India' and 'Outline History of C.I.P.', pp. 285-287.

73. Ibid.

of a new era. Although the course suggested by this Congress did not take concrete shape immediately, but it was a definite radical departure from the course that Lenin had suggested at the Second Congress of the Comintern. The word 'decolonization' <sup>was</sup> twisted and interpreted in a way as to give it a meaning which Roy perhaps never intended. What Roy simply meant was that post war imperialism was not in a position to continue colonial exploitation in pre-war forms. In other words, according to Roy it was not possible to lay down a hard and fast rule determining the relationship between the colonies and the imperialist monopolies in all periods and under all conditions. Better say that Roy's approach was determined by the situation and not by dogma (Lenin himself had warned against being dogmatic).

Paradoxically, the new line adopted by the Comintern was one which Roy had suggested at the time of the Second Comintern Congress. But with the change in the situation at India and as Roy's understanding of the social forces (that worked in India) increased, particularly after the initial gains made by the WPP, he realized that a 'united front' policy was better suited for India. There is little doubt that Roy's approach was certainly better suited for India, specially when the WPP had shown much potential. Unfortunately, the Russian view prevailed and as Stalin consolidated his power he compelled the Comintern to adopt a 'ultra leftist policy'. This became clear at the 10th Plenum of the ECCI (July 3-4, 1929). The Comintern advise now was, "a ruthless struggle against Indian

Bourgeois."<sup>74</sup> The Communists were directed to sever all ties with Indian bourgeois including all sections of the Congress Party and left wing of the Congress also. Gandhi and J.L. Nehru were condemned.<sup>75</sup> The Independence of India League was described as a, "vague organization of intellectuals, inclined towards fascism."

Later writing about the Russian Revolution Roy was perhaps correct in saying that the 6th Comintern Congress did more harm to the cause of Indian revolution than any other single factor.

Roy was in sharp disagreement with the new line of the Comintern and was gradually moving into the Communist oppositional camp. He had left Moscow for Berlin in March 1928 (that is before the 6th Congress) on account of illness. In Berlin, he came in contact with Thaleimer and Brandler, both of whom had been advocates of 'United Front' policy.<sup>76</sup> Thaleimer, Roy later acknowledged was one of his two political <sup>gurus</sup>, the other was Brandler.<sup>77</sup> In 1928 the Brandler group had been expelled from the party.<sup>78</sup> Roy identified himself with the Brandler

74. See ; 'Outline History of C.I.' Tenth Plenum, pp. 290-91.

75. Ibid. Also 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, 127  
Note: The Sixth Comintern Congress was the last Comintern meeting in which free and open debate was allowed and oppositional views published in the official Press organ-International Press Correspondence.

76. See ; M.N. Roy's Memoirs - Epilogue, p. 586.

77. See ; 'Communism and Nationalism in India', Haithcox, pp. 130-131.

78. The failure of the Kappputch in 1921 had converted Brandler and Thaleimer to the policy of gradual approach. In 1923, they proposed an alliance with the left wing of the social Democrats in order to form a coalition in Saxony and Thuringia provinces. In October 1923 they entered coalition Govt. in Saxony but were soon deposed. They had

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group. Between the Sixth Congress and the 10th Plenum Roy wrote about five articles, that appeared in the International Press Correspondence, rejecting the new line of the Comintern. Roy thought that the petty bourgeoisie could be brought under the influence of the proletariat. "They are not likely to advance unless the proletariat met them half way and made a fighting alliance with them for the realization of the programme of national revolution."<sup>79</sup> In other words, Roy favoured a working alliance with the petty bourgeois if the national movement has to be radicalized. A secretarian policy and strategy would ignore the petty bourgeois which in effect would ignore the petty bourgeois which in effect would result in the petty bourgeoisie joining hands with the bourgeoisie, consequently the process of radicalization would be obstructed. Roy criticised the WPP for not supporting the 'Independence of India League'. It was clear that Roy was moving towards right. At the 10th Plenum it was stated that "the fight against 'Right opportunist deviation' remained the central task of the Comintern."<sup>80</sup> Many leading Communists who did not agree with the new Comintern line were removed for holding rightist views.<sup>81</sup>

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speculated that their deposition would result in a general uprising throughout Germany as this did not happen they were replaced by left wing leaders like Maslow and Thalmann followed by Ernest Thalmann.

79. See : 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 132-133.

80. See : 'Outline History of Communist International', 10th Plenum, pp. 290-291.

81. The Prominent Communist Groups removed were : Tasca Group in Italy, Brandler group in Germany and KILBAM group in Sweden, *ibid.*, pp. 290-291.



Roy was also openly criticised by Solomon A. Lozovsky.<sup>82</sup> He held Roy responsible for the weakness of the CPI. G.A.K. Lohani also charged Roy of betraying the Indian revolution and deceiving the Comintern.<sup>83</sup> It was evident from the debates during the 10th Plenum that Roy's Comintern career had come to an end and his formal removal was a matter of time. In Sept. 1929, he was expelled from the Comintern.<sup>84</sup> The December issue of the International Press correspondence carried the announcement : " ... The Presidium of the ECCI declares that Roy, by contributing to the Brandler press and supporting the Brandler organization, has placed himself outside the ranks of the Communist International and is to be considered as expelled from the Communist International.<sup>85</sup>

Before advancing any further it is necessary to pause and analyze the causes which contributed to Roy's expulsion and change in his views. It is beyond doubt that his expulsion was an act of grave injustice, better say it was an immoral act. It can be justified neither on political grounds

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82. Solomon A. Lozovsky was head International Trade Union.

83. It is interesting to note that at the 6th Comintern Congress Lohani had defended the decolonization theory and as Roy was associated with the theory it meant supporting Roy. At the 10th Plenum Lohani said : "Roy was an agent of reformist national bourgeoisie, similar to Nehru and Bose. One who used Pseudo-radical phraseology". See M.N. Roy the Man who looked ahead, A.K. Hindi, pp. 176-77.

84. See : International Press Correspondence, Dec. 1929.

85. Ibid.

NOTE : Roy's articles opposing Comintern's new line were still published even after the 6th Congress because Bukharin remained editor till Feb. 1929.

nor on the basis of expediency least of all on ethical grounds. It was a colossal blunder. A man who had contributed so much to promote the cause of ~~commission~~<sup>communism</sup> in Mexico, in China and in India, who alongwith Lenin had formulated the policy and strategy for communists in colonial countries, who was responsible for the formation of 'Emigre Communist Party in Tashkent in 1929 and later had a hand in the formation of CPI in 1924. It was he, who had suggested the formation of WPP and he was the moving force behind the swift gains made by the CPI and WPP in the twenties. By and large, till 1928, the Indian Communists were following his advise which enabled them to acquire important position in the national movement and in the trade unions. The new Comintern policy, as we shall observe led to the isolation of Indian Communists from the national movement. It also caused a split in the ranks of the CPI. The British Govt. rounded up all leading communists in connection with the 'Meerut Conspiracy Case'. The leadership of the CPI now fell in the hands of younger ~~members~~<sup>members</sup> who had neither experience nor the capacity for planning and execution of communist programme. As we shall see the Communist movement in India since then has suffered because of lack of leadership. The CPI henceforth was torn by fractionalism and regional factors often dominated the decision making process of the party. Recent studies on Political Parties have emphasised the role of 'Leadership' for the success of a party.<sup>86</sup> The coming to

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86. See : 'Party Politics in India', MYRON WERNER, Chapter 12 - Prospects for Stable Government.

power of Communists in Russia and China had been possible to quite an extent because provincial leadership that was firstly able to integrate divergent fractions and secondly, they were successful in reconciling their cultural traditions with the teaching of Marx. In other words, they were flexible in their approach.<sup>87</sup>

Overstreet and Windmiller, in their monumental work 'Communism in India' are of the view that Roy was often, 'self contradictory' and inconsistent in his views. Indian Communists of the period have also levelled the same charge against Roy.<sup>88</sup> It is true that Roy now opposed the Left secretarian policy of the Comintern. His articles written during the period (1928-29) were not very consistent. But it can be said in defence of Roy that events in India during the last few years had much changed. The India political scene provided evidence that the left wing of the Congress was gaining ground and playing an objectively revolutionary role.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, we could say it was not Roy who had evolved but the political milieu that had evolved. It is also not correct to say that Roy was relieved because of the failure of the 'Revolution' in China.<sup>90</sup> While Roy was in

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87. See Chapter 1st. Political Thought of Mao-Tse Tung by Prof. Stuart R. Schram.

For a good discussion on Leadership see also G. Mosca 'The Puling class', pp. 71-72.

NOTE: In traditional societies leadership cannot afford to attach the cultural tradition. As we shall later observe Roy precisely did this, on the other hand, Gandhi spoke to the masses in a language that was familiar. See Weiner 'Party Politics in India', pp. 267-269.

88. See : 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 131.

89. See : 'Left Wing in India', L.P. Sinha, pp. 278-279.

90. See in the Thesis - Roy and Chinese Revolution.

China Stalin was aware of Roy's actions, in fact he endorsed them.<sup>91</sup> But Roy's views regarding India (1927 onwards) were opposed to Stalin's and similar to Bukharin's views. Bukharin along with A.I. Rykov and Mikhail P. Tomsky were opposed to Stalin.<sup>92</sup> Thus Stalin found Roy dissenting at a time when Stalin was consolidating his power. Roy has acknowledged that the internal struggle with the Russian Communist Party also contributed to his victimization.<sup>93</sup>

Throughout the twenties between Roy and Bukharin there was identity of views. In the early twenties, both favoured an ultra left policy and disagreed with Lenin who assigned national bourgeois a revolutionary in the beginning.\* During the mid twenties both modified their views in response to external political circumstances. During the years 1925-1927 Stalin thought on the same lines.<sup>94</sup> As a result Bukharin during this period was elevated to a number of important positions.<sup>95</sup> From

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91. Ibid.

92. Bukharin and his group formed the right opposition group. They were opposed to Stalin's policies at home e.g., opposed first five year plan which was for industrialization and collectivization and also his colonial policies.

93. See : M.N. Roy. 'Our Differences', p. 4.

94. See : 'Communism and Nationalism in India', Haitheox, pp. 138-139.

95. In Nov. 1926 Bukharin was appointed Chairman of the Cominterns.

\* Back in 1916 Lenin had said "All nations will arrive at socialism - this is inevitable but all will do so in not exactly the same way, each will contribute something of its own to some form of democracy, to some variety of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the varying rate of Socialist transformation in different aspects of Social life" - See Collected Works of Lenin- Vol. 23, pp. 69-70. Lenin also said "Leftism was deeply rooted in petty bourgeois revolutionism..." Vol. 31, p. 32. In short Lenin's approach was flexible in fact he was very much against left doctrinism. "The victory of the vanguard of in the revolution cannot be reached without the liquidation of Left doctrinism and without a full elimination of its errors." Vol. 31, p. 31.

1927 onwards Stalin drifted towards the left with the result that Roy and Bukharin found themselves in the right wing of the Communist Party. After having dealt successfully with Trutsky, Stalin began his offensive against Bukharin who was a remaining challenge to his position. And as Bukharin's influence was dominant in the Comintern therefore it was essential for Stalin to get rid of pro-Bukharin elements in the Comintern also. Roy's expulsion coincided with the eclipse of Bukharin's influence in the Communist movement. In Nov. 1929, Bukharin was expelled from the ECCI and the Politburo, on the charge of, "attempting to discredit the healthy and absolutely necessary process of purging the communist parties of social Democratic elements".<sup>96</sup>

T. Saumeyendranath Tagore is of the opinion that real reasons for Roy's expulsion was not due to differences with Stalin but because of, "indiscipline uncomradely behaviour forgery and misappropriation of funds". Tagore also say, "Roy was a careerist and always served the man in power ... . He was always the most servile agent of Stalin ... ." <sup>97</sup> The charges levelled by Tagore do not seem true, keeping in mind his past career and his future career as we shall see. Roy's differences with Lenin at the time of the Second Congress reveal that he was anything but servile in fact his activities in the 20's and 30's reveal that he was proud and rebellious. Louese

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96. See ; Haithcox 'Communism & Nationalism in India', pp. 138-39.

97. See ; S. Tagore - "Historical Development of the Communist Movement in India", pp. 18-20.

Geissler in a letter to Haithcox wrote of Roy, "he never kept quiet even if it would have been wise to do so for his career. He never made a compromise on this field. He was till his sad end an idealist for the cause of humanity. Don't think me emphatic, this is my earnest belief."<sup>98</sup>

Roy himself acknowledges that his crime was "to claim the right of independent thinking". But he further writes, "the duty of a revolutionary sometimes transgresses the narrow limits of arbitrary discipline ... . I was placed in a position where I found it was my revolutionary duty to join the opposition against the present leadership which is ruining the International".<sup>99</sup> In the critical period through which the Communist International was passing an independent personality with a critical bent of mind had obviously no place. It is worth quoting Lenin who once said ; "If you are going to expel all the not very obedient but clever people, and retain only the obedient but ~~clever~~ fools you will most assuredly ruin the party." Unfortunately Stalin lacked the vision of Lenin as a result the Communist movements everywhere suffered serious setbacks. Roy's expulsion had an immediate and grave impact on the Communist movement in India it was split The Communist Party of India on the advise of Comintern placed itself in opposition to the national movement that was fast developing under the

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98. Louese Geissler letter dated 8th March 1966. Referred in Haithcox's Book, p. 141.

99. See ; 'Our Difference - My Crime' by Roy, pp. 25-26.

Indian National Congress. Till 1929 the Communists had made considerable gains and radical ideas had gained currency. The new line of the Comintern and Roy's expulsion ruined the Communist cause in India. Lenin's words it appears now contained much wisdom - 'by retaining only the obedient fools, you would most assuredly ruin the party. This precisely happened the CPI was all but ruined so much so that it could never again be the same party, henceforth as we shall observe fractionalism was a dominant feature in the Communist Party in India.

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern as we have noticed was highly critical of the Indian National Congress though a complete break with the Indian National Congress was not immediately demanded. However, in December 1928, the annual conference of the Workers' and Peasants' Party was held in Calcutta.<sup>100</sup> The Calcutta Session does reflect the changed line of 'Nehru Report' was characterised as a "Bourgeois-democratic scheme of a not very advanced type, and the Congress party programme was referred as a "timid liberal programme of constitutional demand and communal conciliation." It was also said that the "Workers' and Peasants' Party have no intention of dominating or capturing the Congress, the function of its members within the Congress is a purely critical one." The WPP were, however, forbidden to take office in the Congress organization (except with special permission of the national executive committee). The object of

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100. The Calcutta Session was attended by the representatives of the Workers and Peasants' Parties of Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces and Punjab. See : 'Govt. of India' Home Deptt. 1935, pp. 133-135. Also see; Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 127.

WPP it was said, can only be 'to build up its own independent organization so that it can as soon as possible disperse with the necessity of agitation within the Congress.'<sup>101</sup> The Independence of India League also came under attack. The League was referred as a "counter revolutionary organization" and its members as 'fascists' -- Bose and J.L. Nehru, and members were instructed not to join the League.<sup>102</sup> The Calcutta annual conference of the WPP was followed by the Calcutta meeting of CPI. The colonial thesis adopted by the 6th Comintern Congress was endorsed and adopted. It was also decided to make the organization "more active to affiliate itself with the Communist International". A revised constitution was subsequently issued.<sup>103</sup> The next meeting of the Communist Party was held in Bombay (March 17-19). It was attended by Dr. G.M. Adhikari. Dr. Adhikari presented concrete proposals for further reorganization of the party. The party was to be reorganized in five departments.<sup>104</sup> Unfortunately on the next day, the majority of

101. See ; 'Political situation in India, thesis of the Workers and Peasants' Party of India - referred in Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 127. The 6th Congress as stated earlier had been critical of WPP.

See also 'Left Wing in India', L.P. Sinha, pp. 196-197. The Chapter 'Communism 1922-29 contains a good discussion on WPP.

102. See; 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 128-129. See also, 'Govt. of India', Home Deptt. 1935-British Intelligence report, pp. 130-134.

103. The revised constitution described the CPI as a section of Communist International and stated that the Party's object was, "the attainment of Socialism in accordance with the programme of Communist International and the policy adopted from time to time by the party, with the agreement of Communist International", Ibid., p. 134.

104. The five Deptts. were to be related to -- trade unions, peasants, propaganda, organizational and secretariat development and political control. A sub-committee was also appointed to work out details. Ibid.



the members were arrested in connection with the 'Meerut Conspiracy Case'.<sup>105</sup>

As noted earlier Kunnenin at the 10th Plenum (July 1929) had criticised the Indian Communists for building up and strengthening of WPP against Comintern advice on the contrary. The Tenth Plenum directed the Indian Communists now to disband the WPP and cut off all relations with the Independence of India League. Dutt in July 1929, writing in the labour-monthly criticised the WPP. He was of the opinion that it was an organization of class conscious people who are reviving reformist ideas, therefore the need was for a more revolutionary Communist Party.<sup>106</sup>

105. See ; 'Left Wing in India' - L.P. Sinha, p. 222.

See also - 'Govt. of India' Home Deptt., pp. 135-136.

106. See ; 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, p.131. It is to be noted that the views of CPGB about retaining the WPP were not consistent, for instance R. Page Arnot was against the Comintern policy regarding WPP, Similarly R.P. Dutta (S. Ghose, p. 299) in the March issue of the 'Labour Monthly' writes that the Thesis adopted by the WPP at its Calcutta session is of great importance. It seems that there was a lot of confusion in early 1929 regarding the new Comintern line. Even in the March 17-19 meeting of the CPI at Bombay Mirjarkar and Usmani maintained that the WPP should not be disbanded (See Sinha, L.P., p. 221). The Indian Communists had not made up their minds. At the Calcutta meeting of the CPI (Dec. 1928) one of the participants who took down notes wrote ; "The thesis of the Comintern (implying 6th Congress Thesis) was gone into effect and it was decided to accept it as the basis for work. Possibilities of an open party were to be tested (Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 134). It is clear that the word 'open party' here conveys a meaning very opposite to illegal, independent and centralized party suggested by the 6th Congress. Besides in the WPP and CPI already had an open party. The point is that Roy's influence was still there though the majority were moving towards the 'official line'. (See Govt. of India, p. 134). It is obvious there was dissent regarding the new Comintern line but unfortunately most of the Communists were arrested in March in connection with Meerut case and by the time they were released the Comintern new line had already been pushed through vigorously. It is probable that had they not been arrested Roy could have channelized their grievances against the accepting the new Cometer line.

As Roy's influence within the Comintern declined Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya's influence gradually grew and soon became Comintern's advisor on India affairs as he was willing to promote the ultra leftist policies of the Comintern. As General Secretary of the League against Imperialism (J.L. Nehru was a member of the League) he expelled Nehru, charging him for signing the Delhi Manifesto, which according to Chattopadhyaya was a, "betrayal of the Indian masses in their struggle for Independence." Chattopadhyaya also issued a circular to WPP criticising Gandhi for, "chronic reformism and betrayal of the cause of workers and peasants."<sup>107</sup> The result was on April 15, 1930 as President of the All India Congress Nehru issued a directive to the party to sever all connections with the League.<sup>108</sup> It has not been possible to ascertain whether in attacking Nehru and Gandhi Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya was motivated by the ultra left policies of the Comintern or whether personal reasons played a part (The probability of the former seems high). Whatever may have been the reasons, his attack on Nehru and Gandhi alienated the Communists from the Indian National Congress in effect from the national movement.<sup>109</sup> In short, the ultra leftist

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107. See ; "Nehru - A Political Biography" M. Brecher, pp. 114-115. Chattopadhyaya also demanded a "public apology" from Nehru for signing the said manifesto. 2

108. Ibid., p. 115.  
The League against Imperialism was an auxiliary organization of the Communist International over which the Comintern had complete control. Its function was to link up Communist movement with national revolutionary movements in the colonies -- See; Govt. of India, Home Deptt., p. 172.

109. See ; 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 145.  
See also Haithcox Book, p. 134.

approach meant that the Indian Communists should work independently of the Congress party for the violent overthrow of the British Rule and thereby establish 'a Federal Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic'.<sup>110</sup> This is clearly established if we glance at the most important document of the period relating to the ultra leftist policies -- "The Draft Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India."<sup>111</sup>

The document was based on the new orientations of the Comintern. It is highly critical of Gandhi, Congress and the left wing leaders e.g., Nehru and Bose, who were considered to be, "the most harmful and dangerous obstacles to the victory of Indian revolution". It also calls upon the "revolutionary working class youth to build up the "Young Communist League". This Young Communist League would be a illegal organization, its object would be to, "organise the widest possible masses of the working class peasants and revolutionary student youth around the banner of the Communist Party, doing so either directly or through the medium of auxiliary, legal, and semi-legal mass organizations," that is youth sections in trade unions etc.<sup>112</sup>

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110. See ; 'Govt. of India, Home Deptt, 1935', p. 170 and Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 145.

111. See ; Govt. of India, Home Deptt., pp. 170-172. The Platform of Action is divided into 2 parts. One part deals with general principle and enunciated the main objects of the party and defined its attitude towards other groups and parties. Part two contains general and specific demands. For full text see Appendix II, Govt. of India, Home Deptt. 1935, pp. 338 to 343.

112. Ibid.

It also advocated nationalization of all British factories, banks, railways, transport and plantations and establishment of a Soviet Government, right of self determination including separation, confiscation of all forms of property without compensation and abolition of all rural indebtedness, an eight hour working day, increase in wages and state maintenance for the unemployed.<sup>113</sup>

This document advocating an extremely radical course was, unfortunately adopted by the CPI. It was a foolish move of the highest order because it aroused the hostility of all politically active elements in the national movement. Overstreet and Windmiller have rightly concluded that, "it (DRAFT Platform) was a bill of divorcement from the main nationalist movement."<sup>114</sup> In a political climate with high nationalist sentiment and in which socialist ideas were gaining prominence, the best course for the Indian Communists would have been to assimilate themselves with other active elements in the national movement thereby gradually trying to radicalise the national movement. But this they did not. The Draft Programme was the safest road to political isolation, the period following confirms this.

It was stated earlier that during the years 1926-1928 the communists had made considerable gains. The growing influence of the communists had alarmed the British Government, but as concrete information was lacking the Govt. therefore could not act.

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113. Ibid.

114. See ; 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 146.  
See also Sinha 'Left Wing in India', pp. 246-248.

Incidentally a letter dated 30th December 1927, which Roy had written to Central Committee of the CPI and WPP fell into the hands of the Government.<sup>115</sup> The letter revealed firstly the International aspect of Communist conspiracy, secondly that the WPP was being used as a legal cover for communist activity in India, and thirdly that financial assistance and direction came from Moscow via Roy's Foreign Bureau in Europe.<sup>116</sup> Referring to the WPP Roy had suggested that it must be build up to take the place of the Communist Party when the Communist party becomes illegal and that the WPP should broaden its base. "The WPP is to openly identified with the Communist Party. Practically all the members of Communist Party are leaders of the WPP."<sup>117</sup> The letter generally known as the 'Assembly Letter', proved extremely useful for the British Government in its anti-Communist drive. In September 1928, the British Government introduced in the Legislature the Public Safety Bill. The Bill provided the Government with legal means to expel foreigners from it. It was essentially an anti-communist measure. To be precise it was aimed at Ben Bradley and Philip Spratt who were guiding the

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115. See ; 'Govt. of India', Home Deptt. 1935, pp. 130-131. Its contents were released to the Press on August 1928. It was read out in the Assembly when the 'Public Safety Bill' was being debated. It is also one of the last historic documents which was written by Roy as a member of the Executive Committee of Communist International.

116. Ibid., pp. 132-133.

117. Ibid., p. 131.

Communist movement in India then.<sup>118</sup> The introduction of the bill in the legislature evoked nation-wide reaction. It was vehemently opposed by Pt. Moti Lal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas. Pt. Moti Lal Nehru was of the view that the Bill would soon be applied to Indian Communists and Nationalists.<sup>119</sup> The bill was defeated, but it was revised and introduced again in the January session. It now empowered the Government to seize money sent from abroad to finance Communist agitation. Pt. Moti Lal Nehru speaking against the bill at one point said : "After all we are all revolutionaries," thereby

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118. See : 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, p.124. Under the existing laws 'British Nationals' could not be arrested and deported unless it was established that they violated 'Common Law'. The Bill did not refer to the Communists directly but it did provide expulsion of foreigners who advocated overthrow of Government by force or violence and sought to utilize industrial and agrarian unrest to that end-(the implication thus was clear). The Trade Union Bill was also introduced towards the end of 1928 and became law in 1928. Its object was the same to check the growing communist influence in the industrial field. It was divided into 3 parts. a) provided for the establishment of compulsory Courts of inquiry and conciliation boards, b) made strikes illegal in public utility services e.g., Railways, Postal Services, Water and Light supply unless a months notice was given by each person. c) Strikes not related to trade disputes within the industry were declared illegal. In other words scope for sympathetic strikes was banned. The Trade Union Bill along with the Public safety Bill were moved by Mr. Cerar, Home Member, Govt. of India. He quoted Roy's Assembly letter to put forward the view that "a movement was being build up to destroy the whole structure of society."

See : Sinha, 'Left Wing in India', pp. 134-135.

119. See : Times (London) Sept. 11 & 17 - referred in Haithcox, p. 154.

See also L.P. Sinha, Left Wing, pp. 134-135.

implying that both Nationalists and the Communists had a common aim -- ending the British rule. The difference as he said was, "on the question of method -- whether violence was to be applied or not." However when ruling was to be given on April 8th, two bombs were thrown by Bhagat Singh and Butukeshwara Dutta. The Viceroy after a few days acting under emergency powers issued the -- Public Safety Ordinance 1929. It gave the Government the same powers as it sought through Legislation.<sup>120</sup> The debate on the Public Safety Bill lend support to own thesis that the nationalists were sympathetic towards the Communists, atleast to the extent of fighting a common enemy -- the Raj. In fact, the year 1928, saw a revival of revolutionary activity. Considerable stir had already been created by the murder of Mr. Saunders, it was followed by throwing of bombs just mentioned, the Lahore conspiracy case leading to a hunger strike and the martyrdom of Jatin Das (1929), followed by the Chittagong Armoury Raid and the fight at Jalalabad Hill (1930).<sup>121</sup> This revival of

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120. Bhagat Singh and Butukeshwara Dutta were both members of 'The Hindustan Socialist Republican Party'. The British Intelligence Report says that this Party had definite links with Communists Groups. Its members were responsible for terrorists outrages in United Provinces, Bihar and Bombay. The Intelligence report also suggests that M.N. Roy had much influence over its members. All prominent members of the party after the bomb throwing were arrested in connection with Lahore Conspiracy Case. In fact the Lahore Conspiracy Case was a death blow. The object of the party was creation of a Socialist Republic.  
See : Govt. of India Home Deptt. 1935, pp. 233 & 234.  
Also 'Left Wing in India', Sinha, p. 298. Also Struggle for Freedom, Vol. XI, p. 551 and M. Weiner, p. 119.  
Party Politics in India.

121. See : Struggle for Freedom, Vol. XI, pp. 461 & 462.

revolutionary activity which contained upto the end of Civil Disobedience Movement of Gandhi,<sup>122</sup> was an attempt to counter act the Gandhian Movement of non-violence and to focus the attention of the country "to the supreme need of 'direct action', in order to achieve complete independence, and to remove lethargy in political activity."<sup>123</sup> Not going into details suffice is to say that a favourable atmosphere for the growth of revolutionary mentality had been created.<sup>124</sup> In other words, there was unrest and rebellion in every section of the social fibre, this was evident in a growing section within the Congress . the left wing and under its guidance and inspiration youth organizations were also coming up and wanted a radicalization of Indian politics.<sup>125</sup> Nehru was already inclined towards socialism (Bose was also influenced by Socialism and was an important leader of the left but as we shall later observe his socialism was not Marxian exactly). Memories of Soviet Union were fresh in Nehru's mind (he had visited Russia in 1927). Brecher says that Nehru was 'infatuated' by Soviet progress. The Russian visit convinced him that political freedom was too narrow a goal for the Indian National Movement to achieve. Henceforth for him, "a socialist society became the ultimate object."<sup>126</sup> The point is that all

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122. Ibid., p. 554.

123. This was asserted by Butukeshwara Dutta, the bomb throwing was motivated by this. Ibid., p. 554.

124. Ibid., pp. 554-555.

125. See ; 'Left Wing in India', Sinha, pp. 279 to 282. Particularly p. 294 above.

126. See ; 'Nehru A Political Biography', Brecher, pp. 119-120. Also Chapter IX - Hero of the Left, also collection of writings entitled 'Soviet Union'.



these factors created together a situation which was highly favourable for the Communists. That is to say that they could have captured the national movement. But by ignoring Roy's mature advice and touching the Comintern line, the Indian Communists isolated them<sup>selves</sup> from the most powerful channel of discontent and rebellion -- the national movement.

On 20th March 1929, a further (and this time a heavy) blow was given to the communist movement. The Government arrested 31 Communists and trade unionists under warrants issued by the District Magistrate of Meerut under Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code, on the charge of having engaged in a conspiracy to 'deprive the King Emperor of the Sovereignty of British India'. The prominent members of the CPI and WPP arrested were : Alve, Bradley, Dange, Ghate, Jhabwala, Joglekar, Mirjekar, Nimbkar, Spratt, P.C. Joshi (Secretary of U.P. and Delhi WPP), Muzaffar Ahmed, Gopendra Chakravarty, Dharani Mohan Goswami, Gopal Bhasak of the Bengal WPP, Abdul Majid and J.S. John of the Punjab Kirti Kisan party, Dr. G.M. Adhikari and Shaukat Usmani. In June, Hutchinson was also arrested. The case was heard by a special magistrate. The Magistrate, in December 1929, concluded that all accused except Dharmavir Singh should stand trial as charged.<sup>127</sup> The trial began in the Sessions Court in January

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127. See : "Govt. of India" Home Deptt., pp. 135-137. Also Muzaffar Ahmed 'CPI Years of Formation 1921-32', pp. 34-36. NOTE: "The Meerut trials belongs to the class of cases of which the MOONROY Trials and the SACCO-WANZETTI trial in America, Dreyfus trials in France, the Reichstag Fire trial in Germany are supreme instances". Laski. Windmiller, p. 137.

1930 and dragged on for 3 years. The Sessions Court pronounced judgement on 16th Jan. 1933. Except for 4 all of the 31 were sentenced to varying degrees of vigorous imprisonment or transportation. Muzaffar Ahmed was sentenced to transportation for life; Dange, Ghate, Joglekar Nimbkar, Spratt for 12 years transportation, Bradley, Mirzakar, Shaukat Usmani for 10 years transportation, Abdul Majid and Sohan Singh Joshi, Dharani Goswami to 7 years transportation, Dr. Adhikari and P.C. Joshi to 5 years transportation, Gopan Chakravarty Gopal Basak were given rigorous imprisonment for 4 years and Shamsul Huda for 3 years imprisonment. Amir Haider Khan was caught later in 1932 at Madras and was sentenced to 30 months rigorous imprisonment.<sup>128</sup> All the accused appealed to the High Court at Allahabad. On August 3, 1933, the Chief Justice summed up the findings of the Court thus : "It cannot be too clearly stated that in this case the Government has not prosecuted any for his opinions." But he further said that the "accused have endeavoured to put their opinions into practice; the inevitable result of their actions is that the accused have brought themselves within the scope of Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code." The Chief Justice further said : "The object aimed at in the conspiracy was impracticable, one might ever say impossible of achievement." The accused were held guilty of conspiracy but the Chief Justice taking into consideration that the accused had already undergone

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128. Ibid. The length of the trial is the longest in the History of British India. 320 witnesses were examined and 2,500 exhibits filled. The total cost of the proceedings was about ₹ 1,500,000.

4 years of confinement considerably reduced their sentences. By the end of 1934, all except Spratt, Muzaffar Ahmed, Dange and Shaukat Usmani were released.

It was stated earlier that the British Govt. was becoming increasingly alarmed firstly by the revival of revolutionary tendencies and secondly, by the growing radicalization of Indian politics, particularly in the trade union field, the year 1928 as already mentioned saw a series of successful strike mainly in Bombay and Bengal. The Government was perturbed by the scope and intensity of unrest in country at large. A hard policy was thought essential. The British Govt. thus began its Anti Communist drive. The Public Safety Bill (later Ordinance) was the first major effort in this direction. On 29th January 1929, Lord Irwin, opening the Legislative Assembly said ; "Not only have the communist agents from abroad promoted a series of strikes in the industrial world, but", he said, "the programme which they have openly set before themselves includes undisguised attack on the whole economic structure of society. All classes alike are threatened by the spread of these doctrines and no Government can afford to ignore this insidious danger."<sup>129</sup> The Viceroy in this speech not only acknowledges the spread of Communist movement but also shows the Government's anxiety about it. It was clear that stern measures were coming. Assessing the political situation in the country in early 1929, in an entirely secret report the Director

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129. See ; Legislature Assembly debates 1929, quoted in Sanker Ghose 'Socialism and Communism in India', p. 301.

of Intelligence Bureau wrote ; "I regard the situation now confronting the Government of India as the gravest I have known in the course of some 20 years contact with the revolutionary movements in this country ... . The only safe guiding principle I can see is that violence must at all costs be repressed ...; must be dealt with exemplary severity."<sup>130</sup> The Meerut arrests was the culmination of the Anti Communist drive about which the British Government was resolved.

In the short run the Meerut arrests had a two-fold impact. On the one hand it proved disastrous for the party, on the other it split the labour movement. As all the important Communists were arrested the remaining were soon divided into a number of fractions quarrelling among themselves hopelessly trying to impliment instructions from the Comintern. The arrested, however, gained the sympathy of the prominent national leaders. Gandhi personally visited the accused and offered them encouragement.<sup>131</sup> Nehru seemed much concerned, in a cable to the Secretary of the British Trade Union Congress, he wrote ; "The arrests must be treated as one phase of the offensive which the Government here has started against the labour movement ..., undoubtedly there are some Communists in India, but it is equally certain that the cry of communism is meant to cover a

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130. See ; 'Nehru A Political Biography', Brecher, p. 136.

131. See ; 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 135.

See also ; 'Socialism and Communism in India', Sankar Ghose, p. 301.

multitude of sins of the Government.<sup>132</sup> The point is that the trials aroused general sympathy for the Communists. In fact, it made the arrested, political martyrs. If the remaining Communists had any vision they could have successfully made a political issue out of it, which needless to say would have served their long term objectives.

The record of the Meerut conspiracy case provides testimony that Roy had raised a band of devoted Communists in India who had begun to establish their influence over the working classes and had given evidence of their capacity to arouse militant spirit Roy was the main factor responsible for this growth.<sup>133</sup>

The Indian National Congress in its December 1928 annual session had given a year's ultimatum to grant dominion status. Failure to grant dominion status would result in a non-cooperation campaign demanding complete independence.<sup>134</sup> The year 1929

132. See : Contents of the cable to Walter Citrine, Secretary British Trade Union Congress General Council, quoted in Sankar Ghose's 'Socialism and Communism in India', p. 303. Nehru is reported to have said : "the trial is a blow against whole working class (See Brecher, p. 136). The 'Meerut Arrests Created a vacuum in the leadership of trade union movement which was filled by very inferior stuff.'" See Brecher, pp. 136.

133. See : 'Government of India', Home Deptt. 1935.

134. See : "Struggle for Freedom", Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan Volume XI, p. 461. Gandhi also declared that even he would join the movement for independence in case the ultimatum was not accepted. Ibid.

saw preparation for the launching of the civil disobedience movement. To forestall the threatened civil disobedience campaign, Lord Irvin on October, 1929, declared that : "... I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 (The Montague Declaration) that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion status." He also announced the convening of a Round Table Conference at which British and Indian representatives would confer on India's constitutional advancement.<sup>135</sup> Leaders of many parties including the Congress were not much impressed and accepted to participate in the Round Table Conference provided some conditions were met, a) that the Congress be empowered to draw up a constitution granting immediate Dominion status, b) that the Congress have a majority of Indian representatives, c) that all political prisoners be released immediately.<sup>136</sup> d) and that in the interim the Govt. of be conducted along the lines of a Dominion Govt., in so far as possible.<sup>137</sup> J.L. Nehru, despite these conditions was not satisfied but due to the pressure of his father and Gandhiji he signed, ... "I allowed myself to be talked into signing."<sup>138</sup>

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135. Ibid., p. 464. The statement of the Viceroy was criticised by the Liberal and Conservative Parties. The Labour Party was in power. Ibid.

136. "Political Prisoners to be released refers to the Communists arrested."

137. See : 'Nehru A Political Biography' Frecher, p. 139.

138. See : Nehru's Autobiography, p. 197.

The younger Nehru had already made it clear was for complete independence, therefore it was a "retreat from principle."<sup>139</sup> On Nov. 11, the British P.M. speaking in the House of Commons made it very clear that the Viceroy's declaration did not imply any change in the Government's policy.<sup>140</sup> Following this the Congress party withdrew support of the 'Manifesto'. The atmosphere was one of distrust. Nehru along with Bose resigned from the Congress Working Committee.

In December 1929, the Indian National Congress held its famous session at Lahore. It was presided by J.L. Nehru. Nehru's nomination for Presidentship of the Lahore Congress was reflected the growing significance of the left group inside the Congress.<sup>141</sup> The Congress party was divided. The old guard led by Pt. Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, and Dr. Ansari pleaded for caution. Bose and other radical youngmen were of the view that under no circumstances should the Congress negotiate. Bose said ; "Civil disobedience should be accompanied by the establishment of parallel governments based on local Congress Committees and effective organization of workers peasants and youth for direct action."<sup>142</sup>

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139. See ; Nehru a Political Biography, Brecher, p. 139.

140. Ibid., p. 140. The Labour Party did not command an absolute majority in the House therefore to carry on the Govt. Liberal support was a must. This compelled the P.M. to make the above statement. See; 'Struggle for Freedom', Vol. XI, p. 464. The Viceroy therefore when asked by Gandhi for definite assurance could not give it.

141. See ; 'Left Wing in India', L.P. Sinha, p. 285. The proposing of J.L. Nehru's name by Gandhi was a shrewd move, it was designed to keep the radical left minded youth under the ambits of party organization - Ibid.

142. See ; Nehru A Political Biography, Brecher, pp. 142-145.

Gandhi also declared that Swaraj, henceforth, would mean complete independence. The first step in the direction would be boycott of legislatures, besides he authorized the party to launch the programme of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, whenever it thinks fit. The Lahore session has historical significance in two respects. It was for the first time that Congress declared its goal as complete independence (PURNA SWARAJ). Besides Nehru's address was a plea for establishing a socialist society, although Nehru had been saying this for some time now, but it was for the first time that from an official Congress platform he clearly put forward his view ; "I must confess that I am a socialist and a Republican and am no believer in Kings and Princes or in their order which produces modern kings of industries ... . Socialism is thus for me not only an economic doctrine which I favour, it is a vital creed which I hold with all my heart and head."<sup>143</sup> He, however, acknowledged that the Congress could not adopt a full socialist programme now, however, he made it clear that if poverty in India ought to be ended a full socialist programme was essential.<sup>144</sup> He also criticised Gandhi's theory of trusteeship ; "the sole trusteeship that can be fair is the trusteeship of the nation." He further said ; "out of imperialism and

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143. See ; 'Left Wing in India', Sinha, p. 286. In 1929 Nehru was also President of A.I.T.U.C. and presided its annual session at Nagpur.

144. Ibid., pp. 286-287.  
See also Brecher, pp. 144-145.



capitalism peace can never come, ... India could never be an equal member of the Commonwealth unless imperialism and all that it implies is discarded." But at the same time he made it clear that Independence comes first and socialism thereafter; "All these are pious hopes till we gain power and the real problem before us is the conquest of power."<sup>145</sup> The last sentence will help us to understand why Nehru often shelved socialism for the sake of party unity. A resolution (prepared by Gandhi)<sup>146</sup> was read out which called for civil disobedience and for the establishment of purna swaraj.

Before launching the civil disobedience movement Gandhi issued a 11 point ultimatum. The principle demand was for the abolition of salt tax. Although it was 3 annas per year yet it constituted half the basic price of a daily necessity, it was also a symbol of colonial oppression; other demands were reduction of land revenue, imposition of productive tariff on foreign cloth, reduction in the expenses of the administration, amnesy to political prisoners. The last appealed to the radical nationalists.<sup>147</sup> The demands were not acceptable to Lord Irwin, Thus on March 11, 1930, Gandhi along with his volunteers began his famous salt march from Sabarmati to Dandi to commit a breach of the salt tax. On the morning of the 6th of April he picked up

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145. See ; Brecher, 'Nehru A Political Biography', p. 145.

146. See ; 'Struggle for Freedom', Vol. XI, p. 466.

For the full declaration see pp. 466 to 468.

147. See ; Brecher, Op. cit., pp. 144-145.

some salt from the sea water thus committing a technical breach of the law.<sup>148</sup> The breach of salt law by Gandhi, "was a signal for the country wide repetition of the same."<sup>149</sup> Nehru appealed to the youth, -- "The battle field lies before you, the flag of India beckons you and freedom herself awaits your coming ..., will you be mere onlookers in this struggle? ... Who lives if India dies? Who dies if India lives?"<sup>150</sup> By the time Gandhi reached the sea thousands of Indians had court arrested themselves. The Government was alarmed and court arrested Gandhi. The arrest of Gandhi resulted in widespread definance of civil authority. On April 14, Nehru was arrested. Within a few days the nationalist movement was considerably broadened, some 60,000 people from walks of life had been arrested.<sup>151</sup> The Viceroy himself was surprised at the dimensions of the movement.<sup>152</sup> In fact, it was for the first time that peasants and women had participated in the independence struggle so largely. The movement however was not totally non-violent. In Bengal, particularly nationalist revolutionary activities had been revived. On April 18, Bengal revolutionaries raided the Chittagong armoury and escaped with large quantities of arms and ammunitions.<sup>153</sup> This wave of terrorism was not limited to

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148. See ; 'Struggle for Freedom', Vol. XI, p. 469.

149. Ibid.

150. See ; Brecher, op. cit., pp. 150-151.

151. See ; 'Struggle for Freedom', p. 474. According to the Congress Working Committee the number was 75,000.

152. See ; Brecher, op. cit., p. 153. The Viceroy acknowledged this in a letter to the Secretary of State.

153. See ; 'Struggle for Freedom', p. 462 and pp. 474-475.

the Bengal it soon spread to the United Provinces and Punjab also. In Bombay, British authority was seriously threatened. Workers of Sholapur managed their own affairs for a few days. In Peshawar, on April 23, two platoons of the Eighteenth Royal Garhwal Rifles refused to fight their own fellowmen. For some time the Khudi Khitmatgars of Abdul Ghaffar were in control of the town.<sup>154</sup> By May, the British gained control of the situation in Peshawar. By the end of the year the movement was losing its momentum and was withdrawn early next year.

Reference here to the Lahore session and the Civil Disobedience Movement were essential because there were the most important developments in the political life of the nation during this period (1928-34). Strikes, arrests and demonstrations that took place all over India created an atmosphere that was hospitable to radicalism. In other words, the nature, temper and tone of the nationalist movement during the years 1929-32 was such that the Communists could have easily entered and influenced it, but by criticising it as a bourgeois movement and ignoring Roy's advice they isolated themselves from the

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154. See ; 'Communism and Nationalism in India', Haithcox, p. 153. and 'Struggle for Freedom', pp. 475-77. The atrocities committed by the Govt. have been well described by Mr. Webb Miller, Foreign correspondent of the United Press, reference of which has been made in the 'Struggle for Freedom', pp. 470-475. Also see Miss Madeleine Stade's account of the atrocities committed by the British Govt. in order to crush the movement. Her report in the 'Young India', June 12, gives a graphic picture of the cruelties committed." See ; 'Struggle for Freedom', pp. 474-475. "At Wardala, a mob of 40,000 made a mass attack on the salt works, ... several hundreds suffered injuries." 'Struggle for Freedom', p. 476.

centre of Indian political life. Apart from the national movement the Communists suffered serious set backs in the labour movement. In fact, their ultra-left policies split the labour movement. We had shown that the Communists by following Roy's directions and advise had gradually penetrated the labour movement. Since the beginning of 1927, their influence grew, primarily because the Congress had neglected this field<sup>155</sup> and secondly, because they could lead the support of nationalists who were dissatisfied with Gandhi's leadership and non-violent methods. By the end of 1928, the Communists had made substantial gains in this field. This was clear at the annual session of the AITUC held at Kanpur (Nov. 20-28, 1928).<sup>156</sup> The six month general strike, April to October, 1928 had ended in status quo, awaiting the recommendations of the 'Fawcett Committee' which had been appointed by the Government for the purpose. It was a temporary <sup>truce</sup> ~~time~~ the G.K.U. Union leaders began to prepare for a new strike. But in March 1929, most of the Communists leaders active in the G.K.U. were arrested in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy case.<sup>157</sup> As a result the less experienced persons took up leadership and gave a call for a General Strike which was to begin on April 20. The strike was started and somehow dragged on till September 15. On the 16th the workers returned to work without any increase in their

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155. See ; Sinha, op. cit., p. 204.

156. Supra.

The G.K.U. as said earlier was controlled by the Communists. See Sanker Ghose 'Socialism & Communism in India', p. 59.

157. Supra.

wages or any other substantial gain for that matter. In simple words, the strike was a failure as a matter of fact it had to fail. Firstly, because the moderate trade union leaders were opposed to the strike and secondly, the workers were also not prepared it was only last year that they had gone on a similar long strike without any benefits, its hardships were still fresh in their memories. The Communists, henceforth, gradually lost the support of the workers. In November 1929, the AITUC met. The Communists in the session passed a series of 111 considered resolutions, for instance they called for the establishment of a "Socialists Republican Government of the working class" in India, boycott of the Royal Commission on labour and the following Round Table Conference.<sup>158</sup> Despande also wanted that AITUC should be affiliated to the 'Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat'.<sup>159</sup> All these resolutions and particularly the one dealing with affiliation were much resented by the moderates particularly by N.M. Joshi, Chaman Lal and others. The Moderates formed the Indian Trade Union Federation (ITUF).<sup>160</sup> The ITUF group while seconding made it very clear that they totally disagree with the policies of the AITUC. The ITUF wanted trade union activity to be free from foreign influence that is the Comintern influence. The split had occurred because Despande's group (that is the Communist group)

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158. See : 'Trade Unionism in India', S.D. Punekar, p. 95.

See also : Sinha, op. cit., p. 253.

159. See : Sinha, op. cit., p. 253.

160. Ibid., p. 254.

V.V. Giri became President of ITUF.

controlled the G.K.U. the largest trade Union Organization and it was therefore able to pass resolutions of ultra left orientation. This uncompromising attitude of the Communists also split the labour movement which had in recent years emerged as a powerful political force. In December 1930, G.K.U. membership heavily fell.<sup>161</sup> In 1931, the AITUC was further weakened by another split. At the Calcutta Session of the AITUC (July, 1931) the Royalists and the Nationalists combined and forced the communists out of the organization.<sup>162</sup> The Communists led by Deshpande organized the Red Trade Union's Congress.<sup>163</sup> In the course of the years (1929-31) two splits occurred in the labour movement weakening it considerably.

Roy on hearing of the declarations of the Lahore Congress welcomed it. After the declaration he issued a pamphlet entitled -- "The Lessons of the Lahore Congress". In this pamphlet, Roy placed before the Congressmen a complete programme of national revolution. The pamphlet included the following items: "1) Establishment of a Federal Republic of India with an advanced Democratic Constitution, the executive being fully responsible to a single chamber and the parliament elected by a universal (men and women) adult franchise; 2) Provincial autonomy in local matters, the provinces reconstituted for assuming as far as possible linguistic and religious homogeneity, having

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161. The G.K.U. Membership in 1928 (December) was 54,000. In December 1930 it fell to 800. See S.P. Punekar - Trade Unionism in India, p. 95.

162. See ; V.P. Karpit, op. cit., pp. 59-60.  
See also Sinha, op. cit., pp. 255-256.

163. See ; Masani, "The Communist Party of India", p. 52.

government as democratic as the central government; 3) Abolition (without compensation) of the native states and Landlordism by the decree of the Democratic National state empowering the peasants to confiscate the land, 4) Nationalisation of the land, the cultivators having the occupancy right in return for the payment to the Government of a unitary land tax which shall not exceed 15% of the net income; 5) Abolition of all other charges on the peasantry (e.g., irrigation tax) and of indirect taxation (salt tax, excise duties, protective customs duty, etc.); 6) Complete exemption of taxation for peasants living on uneconomic holdings; 7) Liquidation of agricultural indebtedness in the case of the peasants in the state of insolvency; 8) Legislation for the control of usury (interest not to exceed 10% annum); 9) Organization of agricultural banks with state aid for providing cheap credit to the peasant; 10) Nationalization of mineral resources and public utilities; 11) Legislation fixing the whole day for the wage labourer to 8 hours; 12) Minimum wage guaranteeing a constantly rising standard of living of the worker to be fixed by law; 13) Social insurance (against unemployment, sickness, old age and maternity); 14) Legislation of Trade Union and of the workers' right to strike and organize their class political party; 15) Freedom of Press, Platform and Association; 16) Protection of minorities; 17) Right to bear arms; 18) Free and compulsory primary education."<sup>164</sup> The programme Roy suggests is to be achieved, "on the basis of the mobilization of the masses through the struggle

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164. See ; "M.N. Roy - The Man who looked ahead". By Tayab Sheikh - (A.R. Hindi), pp. 199-201.

for the realization of their immediate demands."<sup>165</sup> As far as the socialistic content of the programme is concerned it is clear by itself, in fact many of the above mentioned demands had been put forward in his pamphlet entitled ; "What Do We Want?" e.g., that our state would be based on universal suffrage, that means of production and distribution would be owned by the state that Landlordism would be abolished and it would be distributed among those who cultivate it.<sup>166</sup> But Roy then did not rely on the Congress at all in fact much condemned it. He thought of it as essentially a bourgeois organization therefore, would compromise with the imperialists.<sup>167</sup> It is for the first time that Roy appeals to the Indian National Congress and perhaps is the first Indian thinker who put before the Congress a concrete socio-economic programme. No doubt Nehru since 1927 was off and again talking of socialism so was Bose and others also, but like the Utopian socialists they merely pointed to the social evils without putting for the concrete remedies, or their solutions were too utopian. This minimum programme of Roy immediately drew the attention of Congressmen, particularly Nehru and is reflected (as we shall just see) in the Karachi Congress.<sup>168</sup> After independence many of these demands have found a place in Part III and Part IV of the Indian Constitution and later when the ruling party adopted socialism as its goal.

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165. Ibid.

166. See ; Pamphlet "What do we want". The entire pamphlet published first in 1922 Geneva is included in 1971 edition of "India in Transition". See pp. 256. Also pp. 264 & 272.

167. See ; 'India in Transition', Roy, pp. 43, 181-182, & 240.

168. See ; Brecher, op. cit., p. 175.



While in Berlin<sup>169</sup> Roy gathered around him a few young Indians who were inspired by Marx and who he thought could work for the Indian cause, besides he wanted to establish himself as the leader of the Indian Communists.<sup>170</sup> Tayab Shaikh, Brajesh Singh, Sunder Kabadoli and Anandi Bhaduri were his main followers. Tayab Shaikh was his right hand workman. The success that came to the Royists in India in the 30's was to quite an extent the result of the organizational work done by Tayab Shaikh.<sup>171</sup> In May 1930, Roy along with Shaikh formed the Oppositional Indian Communist Group. This group contacted J.L. Nehru who was a member of the League against Imperialism. This group of Oppositional Communists became the German Branch of the Indian National Congress.<sup>172</sup> This was a positive step in the direction of joining forces with the Indian National Movement (a view which Roy was advocating for sometime). This group of Oppositional Communists was opposed to the secretarian policies of the Comintern and was in favour of joining forces with the nationalist movement.

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169. Roy had left Moscow for Berlin before the 6th Congress of the Comintern - Supra.

170. See ; 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, p.147.

171. In a letter to Louise Geissler dated 12 December 1930, Roy wrote ; "Give me a dozen Shaikhs and you will be the results before long. Shaikh before going to Germany was a member of the Congress and had participated in the Bardoli No Tax Campaign and had also demonstrated before the Simon Commission. In the late 30's Shaikh was replaced by V.B. Karnik (Shaikh suffered a mental break down due to harassment by the Police. In 1942 he was expelled by Roy from the Party. Brajesh Singh came in contact with Roy in Berlin and bore the expenses of his trip to India, though in late 30's he returned back to the orthodox Communists. Sunder Kabaddi also was not with Roy for long. It is suspected that he revealed Roy's presence in India.

172. See Tayab Shaikh - M.N. Roy - The Man who looked ahead. pp. 223-225.

After being expelled from the Comintern Roy wrote a series of articles trying to persuade the Indian Communists from following the ultra left line of the Comintern. In one of the articles he said, "To swim against the nationalist tide would be suicidal. The way to Communism in India lies through National Revolution, not through opposition to it." He told the Indian Communists that the nationalisation of the country should precede nationalization of land.<sup>173</sup> Roy was in touch with the recent political developments in India and therefore realized that the left forces within the Indian National Congress were gaining ground. Writing about it he says : "The petty bourgeoisie" previously "allied with religious and social conservatism, was rapidly outgrowing the leadership of the big bourgeoisie."<sup>174</sup> In other words, Roy saw a process of class differentiation working inside the national movement resulting in the radicalization of the national movement. Roy was correct, a perpetually growing section within and outside the Congress was professing socialism. Therefore, Roy was of the view that the WPP has to lend support to this growing section (which was revolting against the bourgeoisie leadership) and guide them towards the revolutionary path, otherwise the possibility of this section being led astray was always there that is to say they might join arms with the bourgeoisie.<sup>175</sup> Roy criti-

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173. Ibid., pp. 113-114.

The group of Oppositional Communists contacted J.L. Nehru who was a member of the League against Imperialism, though Nehru was expelled from the League subsequently by Chattopadhyaya. Supra.

Tayab Shaikh was also a member of the League.

174. See : M.N. Roy "The Ways of Indian Revolution" International Press Correspondence - Feb. 1929.

175. See : M.N. Roy ; Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary Introduction, Vol. III.

cised the WPP for having adopted a hostile attitude towards the Independence of India League. He felt that had the WPP supported the Independence of League it could have been transformed into a powerful weapon to develop revolution. To quite an extent Roy's analysis was correct. The CPI and WPP by not supporting the Petty bourgeoisie (i.e., Independence of India League and the Left Wing within the Congress) alienated themselves from the Nationalist movement.<sup>176</sup> In those states where military assistance has not been provided from outside Communists have come to power only where they have successfully identified themselves with national issues and at the same time been at the forefront of national issues.<sup>177</sup>

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176. Lenin thought similarly of the petty bourgeoisie; "The petty proprietor, the small master, who under Capitalism always suffers oppression and very frequently a most acute and rapid deterioration in his conditions of life and even ruin, easily goes to the revolutionary extremes, but is incapable of perseverance, organization discipline and steadfastness". He also very emphatically said that, "blind imitation of Bolshevik tactics in different countries without regard to local conditions can cause serious damage to the cause of world proletarian revolution ..." See Lenin Collected Works, Vol. 31, p. 33 & 81.
177. In most of the East European Countries the Communists came to power because military assistance was available from outside. The Communists in East European Countries during the war (1943-45) gained control of the two main departments ; the army and the police with the help of the Red army. See "Europe Since Napoleon" - David Thompson, p. 813 - for fuller details see pp. 829 to 836 also. N.B.; In the case of China during the war with Japan (1937-45) the Chinese Communist Party sank its differences with the nationalist Kuomintang to make a common case against Japan, that is to say the CCP identified itself with the most prominent national issue. See David Thompson, Op. Cit., p. 844. This is also true of the Indian situation after independence. The Communists have come to power in those states where they have "exploited effectively isolated local grievances. See 'India The Most dangerous decades', Salig S. Harrison.

As a result of the new Comintern line the Communist movement in India was being destroyed. Roy also thought that the Communists were missing a unique opportunity. It was clear to him that the nationalists movement was being broadened and being infused with new life. He wanted to be on the spot to give it a revolutionary orientation. As he himself says ; "I felt an intense desire to intervene and save the Indian situation."<sup>178</sup> But undertaking such a venture was a dangerous proposition. Warrants in connection with the 'Kanpur Conspiracy Case' and Meerut Conspiracy Case were pending against him. His friends, particularly Brandler and Thaleimer were against such a venture. Besides they thought that the Indian situation was too 'immature' and there was not and thus there was not much that he could do.<sup>179</sup> But Roy was too keen to be on the spot and after some hesitation he decided to leave for India. Tayab Shaikh, Rajesh Singh, Sunder Kabaddi and Anandi Bhaduri to make necessary arrangements for his arrival, they also carried with them a manifesto written by Roy.<sup>180</sup> They reached India in August 1930. The manifesto was addressed to the -- "Revolutionary Vanguard of the Toiling Masses of India." Roy in the manifesto made it clear that he disagreed with the official policy of the Communist Party ; "The Communist Party had been drifting away and away from the ideals of Lenin. ... The Communist Party cannot advocate that India will be a Soviet Republic that would be running after a utopia. The "

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178. See ; M.N. Roy - 'Letters from Jail', p. 165.

179. Brandler thought a lot of preparatory work had to be done in order to lay solid foundations before Roy could accomplish anything. See Memoirs, p. 587.

180. See ; Govt. of India, Home Eptt. 1935, p. 163.

Soviet State is the organ of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The conditions in India are not at all ripe for such a state. The revolutionary state must be based upon all the oppressed classes. The task of the pioneer group is to get in touch with all concerned with the interests of the toiling masses and with those sympathetic to Communism. The workers becoming class conscious cannot be expected to join the Communist Party if it is organized only with a maximum programme which appears to have little relation to the prevailing conditions. They must be shown the solutions of the problems actually before them, concerning the minimum elements of the toiling masses, come within the purview of the Communist Party. There is no other way to free an essentially revolutionary movement for national independence from the leadership of the bourgeoisie ... . In India, the way to Communism lies through national revolution. To this end it (the Communist Party) must work through the national mass organization -- the National Congress, Youth Leagues, student organization and voluntary corps."<sup>181</sup> What Roy suggested was that the Indian Communists should give up for the time being, their maximum programme. The Indian Communists he suggested should raise the banner not of Communism but Jacobinism.<sup>182</sup> In other words, Roy suggested that the Communists should adopt the Congress demand for a constituent Assembly as this would appeal to a much larger section and temporarily as a matter of

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181. See ; "On the Constituent Assembly", Independent India, Vol. IV, No. 10, 1940, p. 114.

Also No. 8, p. 89.

182. Ibid.

expedience shelf their maximum programme. Roy was of the view that the Communists should follow the policy of the Jacobins, whom he maintained were Marxists of their time. To support his view point Roy quoted Marx Engels and Lenin.<sup>183</sup> The Indian National Congress if it could be controlled by the petty bourgeoisie radical elements it would be possible to convert the Constituent Assembly into a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry under proletariat hegemony.<sup>184</sup> For Roy the demand for the nationalist revolution

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183. By Jacobins Roy meant petty bourgeois radical elements. As stated earlier Lenin favoured a flexible strategy and tactics for World Communist Movement. He was bitterly against Left doctrinism, dogmatism and sectarianism. Left sectarianism was according to him Pseudo-revolutionary trend. See his book "Left Wing" Communism an infantile Disorder, written in 1920. See Collected Works, Vol. 31, pp. 30-32, 80-82. Similarly Marx and Engels also criticised the uncompromising attitude some Communists for instance the 'Blanquists' - followers of Louis Auguste Blanqui. They believed in an extreme left, uncompromising approach. He followed this line in 1848 French Revolution and 1871 in the experiment of Paris Commune. In 1872 5 Blanquists left the International. Engels in 1872 bitterly attracted the Blanquists for their dogmatic approach. See : Select Works - Marx and Engels, Vol. 2, "Programme of the Blanquist Commune Emigrants", pp. 380-385, also pp. 184-185. Engels here has dealt with the failures of such an approach. Similarly Marx also acknowledges that the Jacobins were revolutionaries in their own right. "They preferred the tasks of unchaining and setting up modern bourgeois society ... . They created inside France conditions under which alone free competition could be developed, ..." In short paved the way for the Revolution. See : Selected Works Marx Engels, pp. 398-399, Vol. I.

184. See : M.N. Roy, 'Our Task in India', pp. 33-35.

was merely a prologue for the establishment of a democratic dictatorship. Between 'democratic dictatorship' and proletarian socialist revolution there would be much similarity. By democratic he meant that it would represent an overwhelming majority of the population and as suppression of the landlords and capitalists would take place simultaneously, therefore, it would be a dictatorship also.<sup>185</sup> Elections to the Constituent Assembly would be indirect. Members of the Assembly would be elected by the local units of the Congress i.e., the local Congress Committees. Roy was of the opinion that the Congress Party had till now neglected these local Congress Committees, with a little hard work he and his followers could easily capture these local Committees. If these Committees could be captured by his followers (which he thought should not be very difficult), then at the time of insurrection these local Committees could be converted into parallel governments.<sup>186</sup> These Committees would be instrumental in destroying the organs of power (police stations and law courts) at their level and thus assume their functions in their respective areas and subsequently elect representatives to the Constituent Assembly.<sup>187</sup> This demand for a Constituent Assembly which is also mentioned in his article, "Lessons of the Lahore Congress",<sup>188</sup> became

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185. Ibid.

186. Ibid., pp. 91 to 95.

187. Ibid. See also M.N. Roy - A study of Reason and Revolution in Indian Politics, pp. 37-39. By GROVER. The author says there is a transition in Roy towards 'Revisionism' and compares Roy to Bernstein and Rosa Luxemburg. The author maintains that the contradiction in Roy is there because he attempts to reconcile Marxism with Philosophical Radicalism. We shall come to this point later.

188. Supra.

synonymous with 'Royism' in India.

It is to be noticed that a gradual evolution is taking place in Roy's thinking. This was also true of Roy in the 20's. Some critics have inferred from this that Roy was composed and inconsistent.<sup>189</sup> We have dealt with this charge earlier it should however be added that Roy like Lenin was not only a thinker but also an active participant. In other words, Roy was not dogmatic in his approach as his experience widened and his knowledge deepened he modified his views. Later on when Roy turned away from Communism and embraced Humanism even then the impact and influence of Marx remained. Indeed he would have agreed with Laski that in every country where people have taken to the task of social reconstruction they would have to draw inspiration from Marx.<sup>190</sup>

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189. See Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 131. Also Grover, p. 37. Apart from the views of Lenin already mentioned see also "Lenin and the Russian Revolution" by Christopher Hill, Chapter 8, particularly pp. 161 to 164.

190. See : Laski's Essay Communism.

NOTE : It should be recalled that in Russia Lenin had pleaded for the building up of Soviets and from 1905 they slowly grew -- Lenin had emphatically stated that All power should go to them. These Soviets were used as organizing centres of revolution and in practice they were a sort of parallel government and helped the Bolshheviks to capture power. On his return to Russia in April 1917 Lenin insisted "immediate transfer of all power to the Soviets". In other words he used the Soviets as springboards to power. Similarly, Roy thought that with some work the local Congress Committees could be captured and then the Constituent Assembly. Lenin also thought that a Congress of Soviets could replace the Constituent Assembly. See Christopher Hill, op. cit., pp. 81 and 82 in particular besides the Chapter "All Power to the Soviets" in general. For Roy's views see Our Task in India, pp. 30-35, 80-85, 90-95. There is no doubt that Lenin's impact on Roy was tremendous.



In December, 1930, Roy reached India (Bombay) travelling on a stolen passport from Germany.<sup>191</sup> Tayab Shaikh, Sunder Kabaddi and Brajesh Singh had already reached India in August. Tayab Shaikh during these months had already contacted various youth wings, trade unions and Congress Committees. In fact a hundred persons belonging to various organizations had already signed Roy's manifesto.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, within a few days of his arrival he was able to gather around him a group of enthusiastic and earnest political workers. The most important worker and follower in the group was V.B. Karnik, he soon became Roy's right hand man, other prominent of Roy's followers were ; Dr. C.Y. Chitnis, Miss Maniber Kara, Charles Mascarenhas, A.N. Shetty and Dr. M.R. Shetty.<sup>193</sup> This group was impressed by Roy's views and his approach towards the national movement. Thus Roy was able to win their loyalty and allegiance. He laid before them a clear programme of revolution. The plan of Roy proposed the formation of two groups. Firstly, a broad based party comprising of the proletariat the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. This broad group would be organized within the Congress Party. Secondly, there would be a small chosen group outside the Congress Party. In accordance with this plan a small group of Royist Congressmen known as the Committee of

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191. See ; Govt. of India - Home Deptt. 1933, p. 164.

192. See ; Communism and Nationalism in India - Haithcox, p. 176. Roy also mentions that Nehru responded favourably towards his manifesto. Ibid.

193. See ; 'Left Wing in India', Sinha, pp. 263-264. KARNIK was a prominent Labour leader of Bombay.

Action for Independence of India later as the League of Indian Independence, was formed.<sup>194</sup> The Royists were also working to form a secret Communist organization in opposition to the official Communist Party, and a Committee was formed to organize a 'Revolutionary Party of the Working Class'. Roy hoped that this would become the vanguard of the proletariat and would take the lead in the final stages of the Revolution.<sup>195</sup> Roy thought that a considerable section of the Indian Communists would be won over but apart from a few the rest supported the Comintern line and in fact denounced him as a counter revolutionary. The Comintern also criticised Roy and his group. The Comintern charged him for pursuing a Menshevik policy and that Royists were subordinating the proletariat to the leadership of the bourgeoisie.<sup>196</sup> He was also criticised for advancing the slogan of Constituent Assembly. The Comintern made all attempts to make Roy's task extremely difficult. Apart from the propaganda against him (which the Comintern along with the Indian Communists carried on vigorously) the Comintern sent emissaries to India to check his growing influence. The most important name in this connection is Henry G. Lynd, an American

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194. See ; 'Some Reminiscences' article by M.N. Roy, published in 1936.

195. See: Sinha, op. cit., pp. 264-265.  
Also "Our Task in India", pp. 95-100 by Roy.

196. See ; Sinha, pp. 266-67.

**NOTE :** A number of journals were started by Royists during these months e.g., Independent India, Masses (counterpart of Roy's earlier Journal 'Masses of India') Roy's Weekly from Bombay, Sranjibi (a weekly published in English, Peoples, Vanguard (Bombay). Generally, Roy wrote for 'Independent India' and the 'Masses'.

who reached Bombay in February 1931 and was departed the following December as the British Government came to know of his presence.<sup>197</sup> All these moves together created circumstances which made Roy's task extremely difficult. Besides the British Intelligence was already aware of his presence. In short, his movements were rather restricted. But his past revolutionary activities and experience came to his aid and thus for seven months he was able to work making a considerable impact on a section of the Indian National Congress and in the Labour field.<sup>198</sup>

In March 1931, the Congress assembled at Karachi to give its final approval to the 'Delhi Pact' or 'Gandhi Irwin Pact. To most of the nationalists the concessions given by the Govt.

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197. See ; Govt. of India, Home Deptt., pp. 176-177 - Apart from Lynd, Amir Haider Khan John Magnus Clark and William Bennett were also sent to curb Roy's influence. pp. 178-179.

198. The Pact was signed by Lord Irwin and Gandhi on March 5, 1931. For details of the Pact see ; "Struggle for Freedom" Vol. XI, pp. 483-485. Clause 2 reads ; "As regards constitutional questions the scope of future discussions is stated, with the assent of His Majesty's Govt., to be with the object of considering further the scheme for the Constitutional Govt. of India discussed at the Round Table Conference. Of the scheme thus outlined, Federation is an essential part, so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India, for such matters as for instance, defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India, and discharge of obligations". Ibid., p. 483.

were inadequate keeping in mind particularly the brutalities and atrocities committed on the part of the British Govt. and the price that was paid by the masses in the form of sacrifices. Besides a few days earlier Bhagat Singh, Sukdev and Guru Raj had been executed. In short, the atmosphere before and at Karachi was tense. Nehru was criticised towards Gandhi's acceptance of constitutional safeguards. He wrote "... clause with reference to safeguards etc., gave me tremendous shock. I was wholly unprepared for it ... I said nothing ... ." <sup>199</sup> He further writes, "was it for this that our people have behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to end thus." <sup>200</sup> Nehru and Bose were particularly unhappy about the Delhi Pact, so were the youth. Two youth conferences were held at Karachi at the same time under the Presidentship of Nehru and Bose respectively. <sup>201</sup> Bose addressing the 'Nav Javan Bharat Sabha' not only condemned it but a resolution to that effect was also passed. <sup>202</sup> It was speculated that the radical wing of the Congress and youth organizations would make all efforts to prevent the endorsement of the pact.

Roy had met Nehru at Allahabad and Nehru invited him to attend the Karachi Session of the Congress. Roy on principle was opposed to the Pact but he knew it would be adopted. There-

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199. See ; Nehru 'Autobiography' 1962 edition, p. 257. . .

200. Ibid., p. 258.

201. The Youth organizations were 'All India Students Congress', Presided by Nehru and 'All India Nav Bharat Sabha', Presided by Bose.

See ; Sinha, op. cit., p. 294.

202. See ; 'Struggle for Freedom', Vol. XI, p. 486. .

fore, Roy made all efforts to magnify the voice of radical dissent so that the Congress could be compelled to adopt a concrete socio-economic programme. Though Jannadas Mehta and Tayab Shaikh had voiced objections (as he was afraid of being identified) Jannadas said that the Pact was against the spirit of the Lahore declaration, it was therefore a 'betrayal' of the nation by the bourgeoisie. Tayab Shaikh in a much more radical tone said that the Round Table Conference was, "amongst to suck the blood of the poor ..., we want the rule of the peasants and the poor not the rule of the capitalists." These voices of dissent did not carry much weight as Gandhi was all for the Pact. Roy after the session in a letter to Allen Gottschalk acknowledged that he was convinced that any voice raised against Gandhi was doomed to be a failure. "There is not the ghost of a chance to overthrow the God." The delegates he further writes come to, "pay homage and not to challenge his authority."<sup>203</sup> Unfortunately, Roy could not convince himself of the bitter truth he had acknowledged. As we shall later observe that his inability to come to terms with Gandhi contributed largely to his failure. This is not to suggest that his influence was negligible, and he certainly had much impact on the Congress Socialist Party and also on the Congress Party, but so far he himself was concerned he remained a lonely and isolated cutting for himself a sorry figure in national politics. Throughout his political career he remained a vehement

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203. A portion of this letter is referred in Haithcox, p. 189 above.

critic of Gandhi (we shall come to this later).

The most notable event at the Karachi Session was the passage of the resolution on Fundamental Rights and economic programme. For the first time the Congress Party committed itself to a socio-economic goal. The preamble of the section dealing with Fundamental Rights reads : "In order to end the exploitation of the masses political freedom must include real economic freedom."<sup>204</sup> The British Intelligence Report states that Nehru is sponsoring the resolution on Fundamental Rights was considerably influenced by Roy. The Report reads : "... It is of no small importance that the Declaration of Fundamental Rights of which the Karachi Congress approved at Nehru's instance is in some respects the minimum programme which Roy had advocated in Bombay a few weeks previously."<sup>205</sup> Karnik is of the opinion that Roy did not word the resolution but the, "inspiration and influence was his."<sup>206</sup> Karnik also suggests that on account of efforts on Roy's part the earlier draft was modified on socialistic lines. Nehru himself writes that a, "step, a very small step" was taken at Karachi in the direction of socialism.<sup>207</sup> Whether Roy drafted the resolution or not is still a debatable point and we need not go into the controversy but if we compare the 'Minimum Programme' of Roy with the draft resolution on Fundamental Rights as passed by the Karachi

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204. See ; Sinha, op. cit., p. 287. For details see also 'Struggle for Freedom', Vol. XI, pp. 489-490.

205. See ; Govt. of India - Home Deptt., 1935, p. 165.

206. See ; Memoirs, p. 589.

N.B. ; Nehru however denies that Roy had anything to do with the resolution, p. 266.

207. See ; Autobiography, p. 266.

Congress we cannot but come to the conclusion that there is much similarity between the two. It is also clear that during the seven months he made a strong impact on <sup>national</sup> ~~natural~~ politics. A large number of Congressmen were influenced by him. Nehru in particular was much influenced by him and subsequently his 'socialism became sedder.'<sup>208</sup> Roy during these seven months contributed a series of articles in various journals. Needless to say that these articles were widely read and the correctness of his approach had a strong impact on national politics. The British Intelligence which had no reason to talk highly of Roy had acknowledged his growing influence and the correctness of his approach. The Report says ; "There is no gainsaying the fact that in the seven months during which he was at large in India, Roy did very considerable mischief, despite the fact that the police were continually hot on his heels. His doctrines gained many adherents in Bombay and the United Provinces, and at a larger date also in Calcutta and its environs. He made serious and by no means unsuccessful endeavours to impregnate the Congress with his views and was received and well received by several of the Congress leaders in different parts of India ... . Judged from intellectual standpoint, Roy ever a realist stands out head and shoulders above other Indian Communist leaders ... ."<sup>209</sup> This left handed

208. See ; Govt. of India, Home Deptt., p. 218.

N.B.: See Appendix IV and V also in the Intelligence report.

209. See ; Govt. of India, Home Deptt., 1935, p. 168.

The report referring to an article of Roy which appeared in "GEGENDEN STROM" (a German Communist Opposition Paper) says "it is a shrewd appreciation of things as they really are." Ibid., p. 164.

tribute by the British Intelligence for whom was regarded Roy as the greatest enemy to the empire is sufficient to establish our point that Roy contributed in no small measure towards the radicalization of the national politics during a very brief period. Besides he made a strong effort to build up the trade union movement again. In fact, the Royists made greatest gains in the labour field. It is to be recalled that the trade Union movement had been split by the strategy and tactics of Indian Communists who were acting on Comintern advise. Roy, in order to gain control of the labour movement, planned to unite it with the nationalist cause. The moderates (N.M. Joshi, Cheman Lal etc.) had left the AITUC to form the ITUF in 1930. With them 'Left nationalist reformist', the Royists formed an alliance for the purpose of combatting the CPI's hold over the AITUC and thus gaining control over the trade union movement.<sup>210</sup> And this was not much difficult as Roy had already made overtures to the left wing of the Congress.<sup>211</sup> With the assistance of the nationalists the Royists succeeded in getting control of G.K.U. On October 12, 1930, Despande was expelled from the G.K.U.<sup>212</sup> In 1930, 61 strikes had failed and consequently Despande's influence in particular and Communists influence in general among the workers was fast declining. As Despande's influence declined the Royists gradually gained a foothold. By December 31, 1930, they were successful in controlling the Dock

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210. See ; V.P. Karnik, pp. 58-59. Also pp. 51-53.

211. Supra.

212. S.V. Despande had been elected Secretary General of G.K.U. at the Nagpur Session of the AITUC in 1929. As Secretary General he had earned considerable unpopularity. In short Despande favoured the official Comintern line. For details See- Govt. of India, Home Deptt., p. 162 & Sinha, p. 254.



Workers' Union and had gained a considerable measure of hold in the G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union. The unpopularity of Despande and the Communists was on the increase and it was obvious that in the coming AITUC session they would be ousted. Despande, therefore, decided not to hold the AITUC session which was <sup>scheduled</sup> ~~sheuled~~ for February 1931. It was eventually held at Calcutta in July, 1931 and was presided by Subash Chandra Bose.<sup>213</sup> The atmosphere was tense. Besides there was much tug-a-war between various fractions. Ultimately Despande along with his followers succeeded from the AITUC.<sup>214</sup> The Communists were accused of weakening the labour movement by their action at the last AITUC session at Nagpur. Bose charged them (Communists) as 'anti national' and he was particularly hostile towards Despande.<sup>215</sup> The Royists, apart from favouring the removal of Communists, also recommended that the ITUF Unions be reunited with the AITUC, which it was held should not be regarded as "the organization of the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat ... but as the platform of the entire working class engaged in the elementary forms of class struggle."<sup>216</sup> In the session, both the Royists and the Communists claimed to represent the G.K.U. (The Royists were led by G.L. Kandlaker and the Communists led by S.V. Despande). The matter ultimately was referred to a credentials Committee which ruled in favour of the Royists.<sup>217</sup> The

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213. See ; Sinha, op. cit., p. 255.

214. See ; Govt. of India, Home Deptt., p. 162. Despande's Group later came to be known as the Red T.U.C.

215. Bose was particularly hostile as Despande had purposely delayed in convening the session. Ibid.

216. See ; S.D. Punekar, "Trade Unionism in India", p. 335.

217. See; Masani 'Communism in India', p. 52.

Session, however, ended in disorder. Bose also suggested that those unions which had not paid their dues would not be allowed to participate in the executive Committee proceedings. This was clearly aimed at G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union and most of the members of this union on the AITUC belonged to Despande's group. Ranadive, Despande's supporter and a leader of the Bombay Communists moved a motion of censure against Subash Chandra Bose, which was defeated, with the result that Despande along with all his Communist supporters walked out of the AITUC and formed the Red T.U.C.<sup>218</sup> The Red T.U.C. continued for about 3 years but never gained any importance nor emerged as a force in the trade union movement.

With the Communists ousted, the AITUC met again on July 7, and about 30 unions attended. N.S. Ruikar was elected president and Unkanda Lal Sircar was elected general secretary.<sup>219</sup> Both of whom were Royists, besides Kandalkar and J.N. Mitra became vice presidents (also Royists) and Tayab Shaikh became one of the 4 secretaries. Rose became treasurer. Thus the Royists and the Nationalists successfully ousted the Communist Party from the largest trade union federation. The Royists now thought of uniting all the non-communists labour federations. Ruikar after having become president issued a statement saying that : "the ultra left group which had provoked the split at Nagpur in 1929, had now been driven out, there was no longer any reason why the unions which had seceded

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218. Ibid., p. 52. See also Govt. of India, Home Deptt. 1935, pp. 161-162 and Sinha, p. 271.

219. See : Govt. of India, Home Deptt., p. 211.

at Nagpur should not return to the fold and thereby remove the last obstacle in the way of unity ... . The AITUC should not be officially bound to any shade of political opinion. Its members collectively and individually shall have the freedom to hold any political view or belong to any political party, so long as they accept the basic principles of trade union."<sup>220</sup> It is clear from this statement that the Royists were in favour of trade union unity and would work for it. In other words, they would try to unite the AITUC with the ITUF and AIFR into a single labour federation thereby strengthening the labour movement.

Haithcox is of the opinion that the idea of trade-union unity initially, "advanced as a slogan by the moderate trade-unionists who wanted to isolate the secessionist communists from the mainstream of Indian labour. The Royists soon appropriated the slogan and adapted it to their own purpose by attaching it to the doctrine of class struggle."<sup>221</sup> Roy in a draft, written and prepared by him, entitled 'Platform of Unity' put forth the view that a union with minimum economic political demands supporting the national struggle would be an organ of class struggle. The point to be noted is that Roy broadened the platform of trade-union unity so as to accommodate the communist dominated unions, provided they give up their ultra left methods and tactics.<sup>222</sup> The idea of trade-union unity was professed by all Royists and besides this various conferences were held to

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220. See : Govt. of India, Home Deptt. 1935, p. 168.

221. See : 'Communism and Nationalism in India', Haithcox, p. 202.

222. See : V.B. Karnik, op. cit., p. 60, see also Govt. of India, p. 212.

discuss it and to find ways to implement it. In May, 1932, the AITUC executive committee met to consider the proposal. Ruikar, president of AITUC, who was devoted to the ideal tried his best to persuade all others to the soundness of the ideal but nothing tangible came out as too many fundamental differences between various unions still persisted.<sup>223</sup> In July 1932, again a trade union unity conference was held at Madras. It was stated in this conference that "the Indian trade union movement shall support and actually participate in the struggle for India's freedom from the point of view of the working class. This would mean the establishment of a socialist state and during the interval socialization and nationalization of all means of production and distribution as far as possible. It was further stated that "the methods of obtaining the said objectives shall be peaceful, legitimate and democratic."<sup>224</sup> Most of the organizations that attended the conference agreed but they wanted to exclude the communists from the proposed labour federation. Then there was the question of foreign affiliation also. The ITUF was affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Union at Amsterdam and International Labour Organization at Geneva. The AITUC was opposed to any affiliation outside India.<sup>225</sup> Although it allowed members of various unions, in their individual capacities or as representatives to attend meetings or conferences held under the auspices of the League of Nations.<sup>226</sup> The ITUF

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223. See : L.P. Sinha, op. cit., p. 461.

224. Ibid. For details see pp. 400 to 410 'Towards United Trade Unionism'. Ibid.

225. Ibid., p. 402. A six men committee was appointed to draft the proposed constitution. It included Royists as Jaman Das Mehta and Dr. C.Y. Chitnia.

226. Ibid.

was not willing to give up its affiliation. A Committee, however, was appointed to look into the matter and draft a constitution for the proposed United Labour Federation. In the mean while, R.S. Ruikar and Mukand Lal Sircar were arrested.<sup>227</sup> In September, the AITUC held its annual session at Madras. It was presided by J.N. Mitra who made a passionate appeal for the adoption of the unity idea of Roy, "as the bases of uniting, developing and building up the Labour Movement in India." In this session a resolution was also passed supporting the 'Platform of unity' as basis of trade union unity.<sup>228</sup> Meanwhile, the Committee appointed in July recommended that affiliations with International Federation of Trade Unions and International Labour Organization be allowed. This was not acceptable to the AITUC.<sup>229</sup> However some smaller unions including the AIFR adopted the idea and formed the National Federation of labour (NFL). The ITUF also accepted the unity draft and joined hands with the NFL and together they formed the National Trade Union Federation.<sup>230</sup> Many of the provisions of the 'Platform of Unity' were adopted. It claimed a total membership of 1,35,000 becoming the largest labour organization in the country. The National Trade Union Federation aimed to establish a socialist state in India. The primary aim of such a state would be to improve the working conditions of the working classes. The union also committed itself to participate in the struggle for freedom from the point of view of the working classes.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>227</sup>. See : Govt. of India, Home Deptt., 1935, pp. 211-212.

<sup>228</sup>. Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>229</sup>. See : Sinha, op. cit., pp. 402-3. The NTUF was formed in May, 1933.

<sup>230</sup>. Ibid.

The AITUC was dominated by the Royists and about 40 unions were affiliated to it. The AITUC unions were more active in the cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Nagpur and Madras besides had some success in the United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa and Central Provinces. According to it, the basic demand of the working classes was the, "termination of Imperialist domination, overthrow of capitalism and socialisation of the means of production."<sup>231</sup> The 13th Session of the AITUC was held at Kanpur in December 1933. In this session, two important decisions were taken -- A) to organise a general strike of the textile workers, and, B) to establish an All-India Political Party of the working class.<sup>232</sup> In April, 1934, an All-India Working Class Political Conference was held. It was affirmed that workers should participate in the national struggle and there should be a Working Class Political Party.<sup>233</sup> As the Congress Socialist Party was being formed, therefore, the above project could not materialize. Probably it was speculated that a distinct political wing of the AITUC might weaken the Congress Socialist Party (The CSP was formed in May). The important point, however, is that the idea of Trade Union Unity was gradually developing. Already in April 1934 during the Bombay Textile Workers' Strike the Red Trade Union Congress and the AITUC had worked together.<sup>234</sup> The Congress Socialist Party also emphasized the need for united action in the Trade Union

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231. Ibid.

232. Ibid., p. 404.

233. Ibid. See also Govt. of India, 1935. p. 212.

234. Following this strike the CPI was declared illegal.  
See Masani, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

field. The Congress Socialist Party successfully persuaded the AITUC, NTUF and Red TUC, "to cooperate on specific issues such as danger of another war, Government expression, Joint Parliamentary Committee Report and other issues that may arise from time to time." Certain conditions also had to be fulfilled by the above mentioned parties, for instance, there should be no mutual criticism, no abusing of each other, before every joint action there shall be joint agreement regarding resolutions, slogans etc., there shall be neither advocacy of violence or non-violence by the parties, besides the Red TUC and the All India Congress Socialist Party resumed the right to, "honest and genuine criticism of political principles and policies ... ." <sup>235</sup>

On 14th April, 1935, the AITUC held its annual session at Calcutta. In this session the Red TUC dissolved itself and its unions joined the AITUC. <sup>236</sup> Besides, an All India joint labour board was formed to coordinate the activities of AITUC and NTUF. Thus, by the end of 1935, there were only two central organizations -- A) NTUF generally comprising of the Moderates and B) AITUC, this body comprised of all left forces e.g., CSP Royists and Communists. Between these two organizations there were, however, many broad differences. Difference in their attitude towards the national movement, towards international affi-

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235. See ; Masani, op. cit., p. 55.

236. See ; 'Communism in India' Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 156. In 1933 in an 'open letter' the Indian Communists were advised "to emerge from their isolation" that is to say they were asked to cooperate in the trade union field. The merger in 1935 can be further explained by the change in comintern line after the 1935 7th Congress.

liation and so on. Both organizations said that trade unions were organs of class struggle but attached different meanings to class struggle. To the moderates it implied, "peaceful legitimate direct struggle, to the leftists it meant direct action."<sup>237</sup>

In spite of these differences the urge for uniting in the labour field was gaining momentum. The Socialists were particularly emphatic about it.<sup>238</sup> Besides N.M. Joshi, Shiva Rao, H.N. Shastri, R.S. Ruikar etc., were all in favour of some sort of unity.

Throughout 1935, efforts in this direction were being made, a joint committee of 10 persons was also set up to evolve a programme.<sup>239</sup> In August 1935, a joint conference for the purpose was held but no concrete results came out. In early 1936, V.V. Giri on behalf of NFUF proposed one year of merger of NTUF and AITUC, provided NTUF constitution be accepted and a decision on all strikes was to be taken by a 3/4 majority. This was rejected by AITUC. The President of the AITUC, Maniben Kara (Royist), was much against it. She favoured a 2/3 majority on political questions and an ordinary majority in the case of strikes (A 3/4 majority would have meant a virtual veto for the NTUF, since it was the largest labour organization with 138,000 members).<sup>240</sup> However, at last in 1938 in a conference at Nagpur the NTUF affiliated to the AITUC with equal representations for both on the governing body of the Congress.<sup>241</sup>

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237. See : Sinha, L.P., op. cit., pp. 408-409.

238. Narendra Dev in his Presidential Address at Patna and subsequently favoured the platform of unity.

See : "Socialism and the Nationalist Movement", pp. 8-9.

239. See : Sinha, op. cit., p. 409.

240. See Karnik, op. cit., p. 62.

241. See : Sinha, op. cit., p. 410.

The next chapter will throw much light on trade union unity.



Although unity was achieved in the trade union field but this unity was short lived. After the outbreak of the Second World war, the AITUC wanted to adopt a neutral attitude towards the war. The Royists were of the opinion that a neutral approach would aid the axis powers. Therefore, the Royists withdrew and formed the Indian Federation of Labour (Nov. 1941). In fact, even in 1938, when the idea of Trade Union Unity took concrete shape there were below the surface lines of division which were political in nature. It was made possible then because the Congress Socialist Party since its inception was all for such unity. The Communist Party of India, after the Congress of the Comintern (we shall deal with it shortly) was advised to give support to the unity movement. Between 1935 and 1940 all left parties did favour a united front policy and this was also reflected in the labour field. But as the left parties could not work in a united manner for long in the political field similarly they could not work in the trade union field.<sup>242</sup> To be more precise, the problem of trade union unity is linked with the problem of leftist unity in general. In India, trade unions have never enjoyed independent status or existence. In other words, it is from the respective political parties that they draw sustenance. This point becomes rather clear if we observe the functioning of trade unions after independence. That is to say that they were split on political lines. In other words relations between trade unions have been dependent upon relations between political parties. Therefore, we can conclude that

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242. See next chapter.

mutual suspicion between political parties, particularly, the so called left parties has been dragged into the trade union field. This probably explains why trade union unity was so short lived.<sup>243</sup>

The Indian National Congress as it had ignored the cause of the labour,<sup>244</sup> it had similarly ~~also~~ (till now) ignored the peasants cause. This point acquires more relevance particularly in an agricultural country like India more so if we keep in mind that the conditions of the peasants, since the early years of World War I, was one of gradual deterioration.<sup>245</sup> The prices of agricultural products remained low while the prices of other items of mass consumption (e.g., cloth) showed an upward trend. This disparity between the prices of agricultural and non-agricultural products becomes more pronounced after the depression. Professor Gadgil rightly observed : "the depression rendered agriculture, as a whole, unprofitable and by materially increasing the real burden of the agriculturists monetary liabilities it has made the position of the mass of cultivators absolutely helpless."<sup>246</sup> Besides, a series of other factors also contributed

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243. See : 'Party Politics in India', Myron Weiner, "Left Wing and Trade Union Unity", pp. 154 to 157.  
Also see : Efforts for Trade Union Unity - MRINAL KANTI BOSE - INTRODUCTION.

244. We have referred to this point and have shown how the Communists in the twenties on Roy's advice benefitted from Congress neglect and Roy's vision - Supra.

245. See Chapter 39, pp. 838-839 - entitled "Indian Economy in Struggle For Freedom", Vol. XI.

246. See : 'Economic Development of India' - D.R. GADGIL, p. 488.

towards reducing agriculture to an uneconomic level, e.g., high rate of interest, rackrenting and decline in the size of landholdings; rural indebtedness, and loss of tenancy rights etc. All these factors contributed to the rise of landless agriculturists, in fact this rise in the, "number of landless is typical feature of the economic history of India ... during the early twentieth century."<sup>247</sup> The point, in short, is that the condition of the average Indian peasant, as a result of the great depression became so worse that he was all in a mood to agitate. Roy, as a political realist, saw much potentialities in their cause. Therefore, before his arrest he indulged in the peasant agitation and took up their cause in United Provinces (In U.P. their condition was terrible). Before and after the Karachi Congress, Roy travelled more than 2000 Kilometers and visited scores of villages and towns. Writing about the problem in the Revolutionary Age (1931 April) he said : "All the political activities of the country are taking place on the background of a severe agrarian crisis which is driving the peasant masses to revolt. Having made the compromise, it wanted to check the peasant revolt. Indeed, fear of the menacing forces of the peasant revolt obliged the Congress to seek compromise with imperialism on the terms of complete capitulation. The peasant revolt, however, is not to be controlled. It still develops under the flag of the Congress but defies all its frantic efforts to keep it under control. We are taking advantage of this transitory stage for capturing the leadership of the movement. Active leaders in the

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247. See ; 'Struggle For Freedom', op. cit., p. 840.

villages still remain faithful Congressmen but are driven by circumstances to disregard ideology and policy of the Congress. They were all confused when the Congress called of the 'no tax campaign'. In view of the condition of the peasantry they know that the movement cannot be called off still they are not yet ready to revolt against the Congress leadership. We have, therefore, provided them with a programme of immediate action, which does not directly conflict with the Congress policy, but it is sure to intensify class struggle in the villages. The result will be that those working on the spot will be forced to break away from the Congress leadership unless they prefer to oppose the peasants openly which they will not dare to do."<sup>248</sup> The correctness of his views and approach is revealed subsequently. There is no doubt that the work that Roy and his followers did in U.P. met with a considerable measure of success. The British Intelligence Report rightly suggests that it was Roy's work (during the first few months of 1931) among the U.P. peasantry that moved Nehru to launch his 'no tax' campaign in Nov. 1931.<sup>249</sup> Roy was also behind the "Central Peasants League which was working on lines parallel to those of the Congress and that the League's efforts were attended with a considerable measure of success in certain parts of the province."<sup>250</sup>

Thus, it seems, that Roy by taking by the cause of the peasants in U.P. compelled the Congress to broaden its base.

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<sup>248</sup>. See : Govt. of India, Home Deptt., 1935, p. 166.

See also - Introduction to Fragments of Prisoner's Diary.

<sup>249</sup>. Govt. of India, p. 166.

<sup>250</sup>. Ibid. See also Brecher, op. cit., p. 181.

Nehru in particular asked Congress Party volunteers to go to the villages and attend to their cause. On March 10, 1931, Nehru issued a circular directing provincial units of the Congress to strengthen party organization in the country side.<sup>251</sup> The Congress Party also decided that rents should be reduced by a certain amount throughout the province and asked tenants not to pay excess rent.<sup>252</sup> As the year advanced the Government in U.P. was facing a challenge to its authority. The peasants pleaded their inability to pay. The crisis reached its climax in November, 1931. The Government insisted that all taxes be paid. The Congress under Nehru stated the no-tax campaign. The point is that the Roy by taking the lead compelled the Congress to go to the villages and take up the agrarian cause in U.P. In other words, as a result of Roy's efforts the Congress was compelled to broaden its base. Nehru, in particular, and the Congress left wing in general, were much impressed by Roy's views then.<sup>253</sup> Thus, to some extent Roy was instrumental in radicalizing the lower rank and file of the Congress Party then. Roy was confident that if the Radicals within the Congress take up the demands of the peasants they could successfully capture the nationalist organization.<sup>254</sup>

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251. Brecher, op. cit., pp. 181-182 - Nehru was General Secretary of the AICC.

252. See ; Govt. of India, p. 168.

~~NOTE~~: A no tax campaign had earlier been started in 1930 had been suspended as part of the 'Gandhi Irwin Pact'. when the no-tax campaign was being launched Gandhi was away in London. Gandhi before leaving had asked the peasants to pay half the revenue but they could not even pay that. Nehru sought his advise before launching the no tax campaign. He replied, "do as you think fit." See Brecher, pp. 180-181.

253. See ; Govt. of India, Home Deptt., 1935, pp. 168-169.

254. See ; "Out Task in India"- M.N. Roy, pp. 58-72.

Before closing the chapter it is necessary to say a word about his arrest. On July 21, 1931, Roy was arrested in Bombay.<sup>255</sup> His arrest made the front page news throughout the country. It was perhaps for the first time since the establishment of British Rule in India that British Officials had labour so hard in order to capture a single individual. It took the British Police 16 years to arrest him. Writing about him, the Director of British Intelligence Bureau in India, Mr. H. Williamson said ; "Wherever he has gone (Roy) has left behind a trail of anti British conspiracy and intrigue and his capture and imprisonment in 1931 is an achievement which the police in India may well regard as important."<sup>256</sup> According to the British Intelligence Report, "he was the only man who could make communism a real danger in India... his conviction has removed from the political arena a dangerous enemy of capitalism, landlordism and imperialism and struck another blow at Indian Communism."<sup>257</sup> The British Intelligence Report in this left handed tribute have clearly acknowledged his greatness -- "the only man who could make communism a real danger in India". Unfortunately, the Communist International and Indian Communists never acknowledged his greatness. There is no doubt that had Roy been allowed to guide the Communist movement in India, its destiny would have been different.<sup>258</sup> After his arrest

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255. See ; 'Communism in India', Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 148.

256. See ; British Intelligence Report, 'Govt. of India, Home Deptt.', p. 109.

257. Ibid., p. 168.

258. Salim S. Harrison in his remarkable book ; "India the Most Dangerous Decade", has very clearly pointed out that dynamic leadership is the most decisive factor in the success of a particular Communist Party, See p. 200.

Roy was transferred to Kanpur where he was wanted in connection with the 'Kanpur Conspiracy Case'. The charge was that he attempted to, "deprive the King Emperor of his Sovereignty of British India". On 9th January, 1932, he was sentenced by the sessions Court to 12 years transportation. Roy appealed to the High Court of Allahabad. Chief Justice Tom dismissed his appeal but reduced his sentence to 6 years rigorous imprisonment. It is interesting to note that in the Sessions Court Roy defended himself in an unorthodox manner. He said that the British rule was not legally established therefore attempt to overthrow it cannot be considered illegal. His defence revealed the vast range of his reading, often he referred to political philosophers as Penthon and Hume to support his argument that it was, "his solemn duty to take up arms against a oppressive regime."<sup>259</sup>

After the High Court sentence he was transferred to the Bareilly Jail and spend most of his confinement there. He was treated as a B class prisoner and was allowed to receive and send one letter a month. Most of these letters he wrote to Ellen Gottschalk whom he later married (Ellen Roy). These letters were later published in the form of a book - "Letters From Jail". These letters reveal the wide and varied interests of Roy. One is impressed by the ease with which he discusses subjects such as, Philosophy on the one hand, and, Modern Science on the other. But between the lines they reveal a sensitive soul, a soul tormented by the cruelties and crimes of the World. During his

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<sup>259</sup>. His defence was published in a pamphlet entitled -- "My defence". The quotations are from it.

## CHAPTER V

FROM DOMESTIC TO INTERNATIONAL (C.I.)

ROY, HIS CONGRESS AND ASSOCIATES

In the preceding chapters it has been shown that as the national movement progressed socialist ideas gradually gained currency, exemplified on the one hand by the rise and growth of the communist party of India and on the other hand, by the growth of militant trade unionism. Both the Communist Party of India and trade union activity received direct encouragement from M.N. Roy. In fact, (as has been shown) without Roy's guidance, radicalisation through the programme and ideology of socialism would have been rather difficult. After the 6th Comintern Congress, so far as the Communist Party of India is concerned, it goes into the background and in the national struggle during the 30's the role of the CPI is of not much importance. In the 30's the radicalization of the Indian National Movement is exemplified by the rise and growth of the Congress Socialist Party and the Royists.

The chapter deals with the 7th Comintern Congress, interaction between the CSP and the Royists and Roy's relations with other left wing organisations and individuals.

During the mid thirties in the West the idea of United Front was popularised by the communists to check the growth of fascist tendencies and arrest the drift towards war. Its primary motive was



to protect the interests of World Communism in general and Soviet Union in particular. In India during the mid thirties the idea of United Front took shape. But here its primary motive was to unify all left anti Imperialist forces. The situation created by the failure of the civil disobedience movement was favourable for it. In fact it was thought that a union of leftist forces was a necessary and right step for gaining independence. The motivation was primarily anti imperialist. Although the unification of leftist forces was short lived, because differences of a fundamental nature existed since the beginning and in course of time they appeared on the surface, but even then, it was the first major attempt and on many occasions it did achieve a measure of success - e.g., trade union activity. Broadly, the object of United Front can be said to be two-fold ; a) to establish an anti Imperialist Front; b) to make Congress a mass organization. Roy, as we have seen, had already suggested working on these lines, that is broadening the base of the Congress and unifying labour movement. The Royists, we have seen during his absence continued to work on the lines suggested by him. The Congress Socialist Party in its early years continued to work somewhat on the same lines. The Royists (as we shall examine) during the early years of the CSP were rather active within it, in fact the Royists contributed in giving the CSP programme a socialistic orientation. In other words, we could say that the idea of unity characterised the period (1935-40). Unity slogans gained *currency* everywhere and every leftist party and organization, henceforth, championed the unity cause - e.g., trade unions, Kisan Organiza-

tion Royists, CSP and the CPI also.<sup>1</sup> The CPI during this period also changed its position and came around to the view that Roy had been advocating since the late 20's, i.e., the popular front approach. After briefly discussing the 7th Comintern Congress we shall make a general survey of the period (1935-40) with particular emphasis on the interaction between Royists and the CSP. Reference to other groups and personalities would be made only so far as Roy seems concerned with them.

During their confinement in connection with the Merrut conspiracy case, the CPI leaders started realizing that the Comintern new line as outlined by the 6th Comintern Congress was not very correct and appropriate. Therefore, some Indian Communists suggested that the CPI should be reorganised and differences between various dissenting groups should be settled.<sup>2</sup> In June 1932 issue of the International Press Correspondence, an article was published entitled, "Open letter to the Indian Communists."<sup>3</sup> The letter for the first time expressed doubts on the 1928-29 Comintern line. It said that the, "struggle for national and social liberation has reached a turning point. The bourgeoisie is continuing its policy of counter revolutionary compromise with

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1. See Struggle For Freedom by Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Volume XI, p. 557.

See also 'Left wing in India' by L.P. Sinha, p. 385.

2. See 'Commun in India' Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 150-151, also Govt. of India Home Dept. 185-186. P.C. Joshi and Dange realized that the New Comintern line was not proper. See Overstreet and Windmiller, Op. cit., p. 156.

3. The 'Open Letter' was signed by the Communist Parties of China, U.K., Germany. see Govt. of India, p. 185.

the British imperialism and betrayed of the revolutionary people. The Communists should work in order to isolate the National Congress and all the left national reformists from the toiling masses." The greatest mistake the letter emphasised was "to combine the practice of self isolation ... from the mass trade unions which are under the influence of reformists, ... self isolation created confusion in the communist ranks." The letter advised Indian Communists to take an 'energetic part' in the independence struggle and to be at the 'forefront' of all activities of the toiling masses with the imperialists". The letter further suggested to lead an uncompromising struggle against the Congress particularly the "left national reformists."<sup>4</sup> Logically speaking, these two conditions were contradictory because it would be difficult to be at the forefront and yet expose the Congress and left national reformists. This confusion becomes clear after a year, the CPI was criticised for "failing to understand the need for utilizing legal and semi-legal forms of mass movements."<sup>5</sup> The CPI was asked to take interest in trade union work and "join and unite with reformists trade unions." By the end of August 1933, most of the CPI leaders arrested in connection with the Meerut trials were released. Dr. Adhikari started working on the lines suggested by the Comintern. A Provincial Central Committee was formed and some fractional differences were settled.<sup>6</sup> In January

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4. See Govt. of India, Home Deptt., p. 185-186.

5. See 'Second Open Letter', quoted in Overstreet and Windmiller, Op. Cit., p. 153.

6. See Govt. of India, pp. 190-191.

1934, at the All India Textile Workers' Conference the CPI agreed to work with the Royists in giving a call for a general strike. The strike began on April 23rd in 4 mills in Bombay. It gradually spread and by May day it reached Delhi and Nagpur. In Bombay, the Emergency Powers Act was invoked and most of the leaders, including Dr. Adhikari were arrested, besides, all meetings and activities were banned. In July, the CPI was banned.<sup>7</sup> Though the CPI was banned but its strength increased. The Bombay and U.P. branches of the party had established contact with the newly formed Congress Socialist Party. This helped them in the labour movement and gave them entry into the Indian National Congress. By 1934 it became clear that there was a softening of the ultra-left line. Cooperation with the Royists and moderate socialists took place during the 1934 strike. Efforts on the part of the CPI to cooperate with the CSP also revealed the change in Moscow's attitude.<sup>8</sup> This gradual change in Comintern's policy towards colonial countries finally culminated in the new policy announced by the Seventh Comintern Congress which met in 1935. The main spokesman of the 'New Policy' at the Seventh Congress was the Chinese leader Wang Ming. He noted that for colonial countries the Comintern had framed 'excellent resolutions', without paying sufficient attention to the real possibility of carrying them out." The Communists,

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7. Ibid., p. 197. Along with the CPI the REPTUL, Workers Publishing House, Young Communist League of Bombay & Madras were also declared illegal. The Bar on CPI was lifted in 1942. See Govt. of India, pp. 203-204.

8. See Overstreet and Windmiller, Op. Cit., p. 156. Also Sinha, Op. cit., 322-328.

he further said, "in dependent areas had been directed to form their own small unions with the result that they have been kept away from the masses."<sup>9</sup> On the basis of the experience of the Chinese Communist Party he suggested a new approach. According to him, "it is not possible for a small Communist Party, to be transformed into a mass party unless the Communist Party participates in the national struggle against foreign aggressor."<sup>10</sup> The Chinese Comrade was of the view that the Indian Communists by their left sectarian attitude had isolated themselves from the nationalist movement. "Our Indian Comrades have suffered for a long time from left sectarian errors; they did not participate in all mass demonstrations organized by the National Congress or organizations affiliated with it." George Dimitrov also expressed the Comintern's policy for India. He said ; "the CPI must carry on active work inside the organisations which take part in the Indian National Congress, facilitating the process of crystallisation of a national revolutionary wing among them, for the purpose of further developing the national liberation movement."<sup>11</sup> In other words, Dimitrov was suggesting a united front from below approach, that is to say he wanted radicalization of a section of the Congress which would considerably influence the Congress leadership.<sup>12</sup> (A

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9. see Outline History of Communist International, p. 388-93.

10. Ibid. see also Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p. 158.

11. see Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p. 158.

12. see Outline History of Communist International, pp. 388-390.

view similar to Roy). Therefore, the final resolution on the United Anti Imperialist Front in the colonies and Dependent Colonies, adopted by the 7th Congress of the Comintern read as, "... repudiates the views according to which the revolution in the colonial countries was characterised merely as a bourgeois democratic, which was rapidly evolving into a socialist revolution." It stressed that, "previously formulated slogans of a workers and peasants' revolution, Soviet Governments etc., were premature," as far as most of these countries were concerned. They indicated an "underestimation of the general national and anti-imperialist aims."<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the communists were advised to participate actively in the "mass anti imperialist movements headed by the nationalists-reformists" and to seek joint action with them on the basis of an, "anti imperialists platform."<sup>14</sup> It particularly made it clear that in India the CPI should try to establish a, "united anti imperialist front both from within and without the Indian National Congress."<sup>15</sup> In other words, the four class strategy was revived for the colonies or that which Lenin had advocated during the second Comintern Congress. Lenin, speaking during the second congress, had emphasized, that in a number of countries the united front governments will prove to be one of the most important transitional forms and will pave the way to the dictatorship of the proletariat. And this was the view that Roy, of late, had been advocating. Although the Comintern had now come around to the view that Roy had been advocating, yet an important

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13. Ibid., pp. 388-389.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

difference remained. The Seventh Comintern Congress wanted a united front 'from within' and from 'without' the Congress Party. Roy favoured a united front from 'within' only, that is to say Roy did not appreciate CPI's efforts to build up separate organizations as peasant's Leagues, trade unions, youth Leagues, outside the Indian National Congress, because such a move he thought would divide and weaken the Congress Party which he since late referred to as, "the vehicle of Indian nationalism."<sup>16</sup> However, there was now much similarity between Roy's views and the Comintern line. Roy, therefore, applied for readmission which Stalin denied.

The new Comintern line was further clarified and developed R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley in an article entitled, "The Anti Imperialist People's Front in India", which subsequently came to be known as the "Dutta-Bradley Thesis". The authors, in their thesis maintained : "Every Indian patriot will recognise that the first need for the powerful advance of the Indian National struggle, the key need of the present situation is the unity of all anti-imperialist forces in common struggle. This is the indispensable condition for the successful fight against the existing and ever sharpening reaction and oppression ... . It is evident that all elements, including from among the liberals, who are prepared to break with the co-operation with imperialism and accept the programme of national struggle, are welcome to the ...

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16. see 'Our Differences' by M.N. Roy, p. 167-68.  
see also Masani 'Communist Party of India', p. 58. Masani maintains that the change in the Comintern line was motivated by Soviet, defence interests and also by the change in the 'objective situation'. pp. 58-59.

common front ...". Referring to the Indian National Congress the authors said that it can, "play the foremost role in the work of realizing Anti-Imperialist People's Front, by transforming its organization and programmes."<sup>17</sup> The Dutta - Bradley Thesis evoked a unanimous response from all anti imperialists elements. The Politbureau of the Indian Communist Party stated ; "No political document has created so much stir in recent times as the Dutta-Bradley's article, "The Anti Imperialist Peoples Front in India," ... Comrade Dutta and Bradley's article successfully applies to the actual circumstances prevalent in India ... . The concrete application to the present stage of the anti imperialist movement in our country of the line of the seventh Congress is a historic affair."<sup>18</sup> The thesis further stated ; "Congress Socialists, Trade Unionists, Communists and left Congressmen should all be able to unite on the essentials of a minimum programme of anti-imperialist struggle for complete independence, of organization of the masses and development of mass struggle, and of the fight for changes in the congress constitution, policy, organization and leadership to forward these aims. The Congress Socialist Party can play an especially important part in this as the grouping of all the radical elements in the existing Congress. It is of the greatest importance that every effort should be made to clarify questions

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17. see The Communist (organ CPI) September 1936, quoted in Masani, p. 59.

NOTE: The Dutt and Bradley Thesis appeared on the eve of the Lucknow Session of the Congress. P.C. Joshi at the same time was elected General Secretary and he advised the Communists to enter CSP - Sinha, 425.

18. Ibid.



of programme and tactics in the Congress Socialist Party."<sup>19</sup> In other words, it was a clear directive for the Indian Communists to join the Congress Socialist Party. In January 1936, on the recommendations of Jaya Prakash Narain, the Communists were admitted to the CSP and thus gained admittance into the Indian National Congress also.<sup>20</sup> The Communists, however, could not work within the CSP for long. Their loyalty towards the CSP was often suspected. In August 1937, Jaya Prakash Narain and in September 1938, Masani brought to light certain documents which revealed that the Communists did not consider the CSP a Socialist Party for that matter. The only socialist party they thought was the Communist Party. In December 1939, Jaya Prakash Narain issued a 'War Circular' which condemned the Communists for destroying the unity within the CSP and in March 1940, the National Executive of the CSP resolved to expel them.<sup>21</sup>

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19. see Socialism and Communism - India - Sanker Ghose pp. 310-311 and also Sinha - Left Wing in India, p. 419-426.

NOTE: the similarity between the Dutta Bradley Thesis and Roy's Minimum Programme already referred. However Dutta-Bradley did not approve of Roy's idea of Constituent Assembly.

20. Masani says that, "both open and concealed members of the Communist Party were thus given an opportunity to infiltrate into positions of importance in the national forces." see Masani, Communism in India, p. 68. However, since the end of 1936 there were reports that Communists were disrupting the unity of the party. Relations, henceforth, were rather uneasy. The problem of CSP and relations with Communists have been dealt in detail by Jaya Prakash Narain in : Socialist Unity and CSP. J.P. Narain, however, has been entical of the Communists. Incidentally, it was he who was enthusiastic about their joining the CSP. see Masani op. cit., p. 66-68. Overstreet Windmiller, op. cit., 162-163; Sanker Ghose, op. cit., 313-314 - we shall come to this point a little later also.

21. see Sanker Ghose, op. cit., 313.

Various socialist groups sprang in India during the thirties. Within the Congress, Nehru was the first to be attracted towards socialism (as one shall show this later). By the time the 'Civil Disobedience movement' gained momentum socialist ideas were clearly discernable within the congress and the conversion of ideas into an effective movement was a matter of time. And this precisely happened during the early thirties when we see various socialist organizations coming up.<sup>22</sup> The Bihar Socialist Party was formed in 1931, though the Civil Disobedience Movement hampered its rapid progress.<sup>23</sup> Later on, the Bihar Socialist Party became the pioneer of Socialist Movement in India. In 1933, socialist groups sprang up in U.P. and Delhi. Besides M.R. Masani, Achyut Patwardhan and Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya formed the Bombay Socialist Party (1933)<sup>24</sup> and Sampurnanand, Paripurnanand, Tarapada Bhattacharya and Kamlapati Tripathi formed a socialist group in Benares.<sup>25</sup> Socialists, like Shivanath Banerjee, Charuchandra Chatterjee, Hariharnath Shastri, Dr. V. Mukerjee, were already active in the trade unions and advocated a socialist republic. In 1934 at Jabalpur they formed the All India Working class party.<sup>26</sup>

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22. see 'Left Wing in India', L.P. Sinha, p. 304.

23. see 'Socialism and the National Revolution, Acharya Narendra Dev, p. 25.

24. Ibid., also see Sinha, Op. Cit., p. 305.

25. Sinha, Op. Cit., p. 305-306. Sampurnanand had put forward a socialist programme proposing abolition of Zamindari, nationalization of Key industries etc. see 'Memoirs and Reflections' by Sampurnanand, p. 73-74.

26. see Sinha, Op. Cit., p. 306.

The Nav Bharat Sabha under the Chairmanship of S.C. Bose was propagating a socialistic pattern of society. In Punjab also in September 1933 a Socialist Party was formed.<sup>27</sup> The formation of these various socialist groups was an indication that a sizable section of the Congress was dissatisfied with the present Congress leadership and its methods, it was also implied that if the Congress further failed to provide proper leadership these various socialists groups would soon be organised on a national scale. It was, however, in 1933 that Jai Prakash Narain, Ashok Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meharally, M.R. Masani, N.G. Gore, S.M. Joshi and M.L. Dantawala thought of organising a socialist party on a national basis without leaving the Congress.<sup>28</sup> Their decision to remain in the Congress was a tacit acknowledgement that the Indian National Congress was the main organization and independence was the foremost goal.<sup>29</sup> But at the same time they had many reservations against the Congress, for instance they thought it was not a mass organisation, that is to say it was a party of privileged people and <sup>of</sup> vested interests.<sup>30</sup> These

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27. The Punjab Socialist Party claimed itself to be Marxist, it joined the CSP in 1936, till then it was more influenced by the Communists. Ibid., 306.
28. See Sanker Ghose, op. cit., p. 261. The names referred above were in prison in connection with the Second Civil Disobedience Movement. Ibid.
29. See Acharya Narendra Dev "Socialism and the National Revolution", p. 34-35. It would be suicidal for us to cut ourselves off from the national movement which the Congress undoubtedly represents. p. 4.
30. Nehru in "India and the World" has acknowledged that the mass basis of the Congress is not reflected on the organizational side, p. 29.

socialists were also of the view that the Congress did not have any socio-economic programme for improving the lot of the masses. This was made clear by Acharya Narendra Dev when he aptly said : "The Congress to-day may accept a socialist programme only in a mutilated form but the whole drive of the nation will be in that direction, because the responsibility for carrying out the struggle for national independence is more and more developing upon the masses. Congressmen have so far been approaching the masses in the name of democracy and political freedom, but these high platitudes have neither moved them out of their apathy and quiescence and the response accordingly has not been very satisfactory. These abstract ideas make no appeal to the masses because they have no meaning for them. They can however, be made restive and class conscious and can come into the arena of active warfare only when an economic appeal is made to them. Whenever they have arisen, their slogan has been removed of some specific grievance and not the slogan of liberty and equality."<sup>31</sup> Masani also thought on the same lines. In 1934, he said : "... the civil disobedience failed because of the inadequate mass response."<sup>32</sup> Similar views were expressed by Jai Prakash and Mehrally. In the meanwhile, most of these socialists were released as Gandhi had decided to suspend the civil Disobedience Movement. The released socialist leaders proposed to organize socialists groups on provincial basis as a result the Bombay Congress Socialist group came into existence at the end of 1933.<sup>33</sup> It was proposed to organise -

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31. see. Acharya Narendra Dev, Op. cit., p. 8-9.

32. see. L.P. Sinha, Op. cit., p. 311.

33. Ibid., p. 312.

socialists groups in various provinces on similar lines. Meanwhile in May, 1934, the All India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.) met at Patna to give formal endorsement to Gandhi's decision to suspend the Civil Disobedience Movement. The A.I.C.C. also endorsed the decision of the Swantra Party to contest the forthcoming elections to the central and Legislative Assembly. These controversial decisions further alienated a considerable section which was already dissatisfied with Gandhi's leadership.<sup>34</sup> During the same month Jai Prakash Narain organised a Socialist Conference at Patna. The conference was organised on all India level and was presided by Acharya Narendra Dev. Narendra Dev explaining the purpose of the conference said : "... it was to prevent an outright drift to constitutionalism and put a more dynamic programme before the country ... ."<sup>35</sup> All those present at the conference vehemently opposed the decision of the Congress to enter the Central Legislative Assembly. K.P. Nariman said that it was a clear violation of the 1929 Lahore resolution. (The Lahore resolution had called for boycotting Legislatures and had demanded complete independence). The Socialist Conference in a resolution asked the Congress to adopt a more positive socialist programme. The resolution read ; "Whereas the preamble of the Fundamental Rights resolution of the Karachi Congress declares that in order to end the exploitation, it is necessary that the Congress should adopt a programme that

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34. see. Sunkor Ghose 'Socialism and Communism in India', p. 262.  
see also Jinha, Op. cit., p. 312.

35. see. Presidential address of Acharya N. Dev in 'Socialism and the National Revolution', p. 4.

is socialist in action and objective ... ."<sup>36</sup>

The first All India Conference of the Congress Socialists was followed by the first conference of the All India Congress Socialist Party, held on October 21-22, 1934 in Bombay. It was presided by Sampurnanand. Between the Patna Conference and the Bombay Conference, there was marked increase in the provincial socialist organizations of the Party - from 3 to 13.<sup>37</sup> The Conference was attended by 137 delegates representing 13 provincial organisations. A Constitution was adopted at the Conference and according to it the party was named "All India Congress Socialist Party". An executive Committee was formed consisting of General Secretary, 4 joint secretaries, 11 ordinary members, decisions were to be taken by an ordinary majority. The Annual Conference was the highest decision making body binding on all affiliated bodies. In short, the organizational was quite similar to the Congress. The object of the Party was -- a) achievement of complete independence in the sense of separation from the British Empire.<sup>38</sup> b) The establishment of a socialist society. The esta-

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36. see. Indian Annual Register 1934, relevant portion quoted in Sinha, Op. cit., p. 314.

N.B.: The Patna Conference was negative in character as it was confined to Congress criticism and prevent it from drifting towards 'neo constitutionalism'. Nothing was said of the organizational or ideological set up. See Sinha, pp. 314-315.

37. Ibid., p. 315. The organisation initially was on linguistic basis.

38. see. Platform of Party referred in Sinha, Op. cit., p. 323. This also implied refusal to compromise at any stage with British imperialism. According to the Socialists although the Congress had declared Purna Swaraj as its goal but had failed to define it clearly. Jai Prakash Narain was of the

establishment of a Socialist Society was further clarified by the adoption of a 15 point programme. These 15 points were deemed to be necessary for realising a socialist pattern of society. They were, as follows :

- 1) Transfer of all power to the producing classes.
- 2) Development of the economic life, planned and controlled by the State.
- 3) Socialization of key principal industries (e.g., steel, cotton, jute, railways, shipping, plantations, mines etc.), Insurance and Public utilities, with a view to the progressive socialization of the instruments of production, distribution and exchange.
- 4) State monopoly of foreign trade.
- 5) Organization of co-operative for production distribution and credit in the unsocialized sector of the economic life.
- 6) Elimination of Princes and Landlords and all other classes of exploiters without compensation.
- 7) Redistribution of land to the peasants.
- 8) The state to encourage and control co-operative and collective farming.
- 9) Liquidation of debts owned by peasants and workers.
- 10) Recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the State.
- 11) "To everyone according to his means" is to be the basis of ultimate distribution of goods.
- 12) Adult franchise which shall be on functional basis.
- 13) The state shall neither support nor discriminate between religions nor recognise any distinction based on class or

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- 13) The state shall neither support nor discriminate between religions nor recognise any distinction based on class or



community.

14) The state shall not discriminate between the sexes.

15) Repudiation of so called Public Debt of India.<sup>39</sup>

It was clearly said that for the realization of the programme the CSP would work inside as well as outside the congress. Working outside meant 'entering peasant and labour unions' thus participation in the day to day economic struggle of the workers and peasants.<sup>40</sup> The former course that is working within the congress, was meant to compel the Congress Party to accept these objectives. The latter course, that is working outside implied the creation of a mass movement thereby intensifying class struggle for realizing of socialism.

Looking critically at the programme and plan of action<sup>41</sup> of the Congress Socialist Party one can easily conclude that it was neither a comprehensive programme nor a coherent plan. The programme contained elements of various ideologies. The impact of Marxian writing is clearly seen in the programme. At the same time, many of the leaders of the C.S.P. were influenced by Fabian Socialists, Guild Socialists and at least also by the Indian tradition of nonviolence (therefore, indirectly by Gandhi who

39. see. Programme of the C.S.P. as adopted at Bombay in British Intelligence Report - Appendix VI, p. 361-362.

40. Ibid., p. 362.

41. For detailed Plan of Action of the C.S.P. see Appendix VI of the British Intelligence Report 1935, p. 361-62.

NOTE: A little later, we shall show that there is much similarity between the CSP programme plan and the one advocated by Roy earlier at the time of the Karachi Congress.

was the chief spokesman of this creed of non-violence). On the one hand, they were all critical of the present congress leadership while on the other hand, they were infatuated by socialism, which was in vogue among educated Indians then. In fact, it was more of a sentiment (as it is even to-day, unfortunately this word since its inception till date in our country has been devoid of meaning) than a distinct ideology. They all talk of class war and showed a sympathy for the masses. For instance, Narendra Dev often quotes Lenin extensively and refers many a times to imperialism as the, "last stage of capitalism." Of Fascism, he says that it, "is only attempting to suppress the contradictions created by capitalists without attempting to remove the cause of those contradiction ... ." <sup>42</sup> Speaking about the Socialist Party in 1935, Narendra Dev said ; "The party has come into existence as a result of a group of Congressmen in the course of the struggle. They came under the impact of the socialist thought of the world ... . The choice before the World now lay between Socialism and Fascism and that Capitalist Democracy seemed to have no future before it ... . Russia in the midst of surrounding gloom was the only hope for the poor, the oppressed and down-trodden for whom it is a great precursor of a new era for the masses of humanity ... ." In the same address, he said, "... as a result of having studied the history of revolutions in various countries they (Congress Socialists) have come to the conclusion that the programme of the Congress should be fundamentally

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42. see. Presidential Address by N. Dev at Patna, May 17, 1934 in 'Socialism and the National Revolution', pp. 4 to 29.

altered in order to achieve complete independence ... ."43 Jai Prakash Narain, writing on similar lines said, "Let not the Russian mistakes blind us to their great achievements, to the lessons they are teaching. For us, who are to do things, who have a task before us, it is the greatest principle of a new life that the Russians are so boldly practising that alone is of value."44 Sampurnanand also called himself a Marxist and professed to believe in 'scientific socialism'.45 It is clear, that the prominent leaders of the C.S.P. were much impressed by the writings of Marx and the rapid progress made by Soviet Union. In fact, most of the leaders of the C.S.P. in their writing then used Marxian terminology as J.P. Narain said it was a Party of all those who believed in Marxism and the Party was also described as Marxist.46 And yet, it is interesting to note that none of these socialists drew Marxian conclusions. Sampurnanand for instance says he was a Marxist but he also says that economic interpretation does not conflict with Advaitism. In his book 'Samajwada' he passionately tries to reconcile Advaitism with Marxism, probably therefore, later on he remained neither a Marxist nor a socialist. Achyut Patwardhan and Ram Manohar Lohia both of whom were prominent members of the CSP were influenced and professed faith in Non-violence. Subsequently Gandhi's impact became marked in their ideological

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43. see. N. Dev. Presidential Address at the Gujrat Congress Socialist Party Conference, 1935. Op. Cit., pp. 74-75.

44. see. 'Why Socialism'. J.P. Narain, p. 57.

45. see. Samajwada - Sampurnanand, p. 40.

46. Socialist Unity and CSP - J.P. Narain, p. 3.

learnings. Masani formerly a member of the British Labour Party was opposed to the cooperation of the CSP with the Communists.<sup>47</sup> Jai Prakash and Narendra Dev, also did not believe in the Marxian concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The point is that since the beginning, there were many ideological and temperamental differences<sup>48</sup> among the C.S.P. leaders, and this helps us in understanding the inchoate nature of Indian Socialism in the 30's and later also. Socialism among the educated Indians then was a sort of fashion, a sign of progressivism. Narendra Dev in his presidential address himself acknowledged; "Socialism is in the air, we cannot escape it. A new school of thought has come into existence none to soon. In the days to come the Congress shall more and more talk of radical economic programme ..."<sup>49</sup> The Acharya was correct, 'Socialism was in the air', and it was precisely for this reason that it was preached and accepted by the majority of members of the C.S.P., that is to say, that most of the members embraced socialism not because of conviction but for reasons of expediency fashion, etc. The C.S.P. was characterized by heterogeneity and for most of its members socialism was merely passive acceptance of a creed it never became a way of life. The inchoate nature of socialism as revealed in the 30's still continues till date. The later careers of the prominent leaders of the C.S.P. supports our stand that they embraced socialism

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47. see. 'Communist Party of India', Masani, p. 54.

48. Ibid., p. 53. also see Sinha, Op. Cit., pp. 330-335. and, 'Socialist Unity and C.S.P.', J.P. Narain, pp. 1 to 12.

49. see. Narendra Dev's Presidential Address at Patna, 1934. in 'Socialism and the National Revolution', p. 7.

not out of conviction. For instance, Jai Prakash Narain during the 40's came under the influence of Gandhi and in the 50's was influenced by Vinoba Bhava and was active in the Sarvodaya Movement. In the fifties, he also put forward the idea of 'partyless democracy' and in the 70's coined the phrase 'total revolution'. M.R. Masani resigned from the C.S.P. in 1939, later became an vehement critic of the Congress Party and an advocate of 'free enterprise'. In 1959, he formed the Swantra Party. Ashok Mehta after the dissolution of the CSP joined the P.S.P. and in 1962 joined the Congress but after the Congress split in 1969 decided to side with Congress 'O'. Lohia also joined the P.S.P. but left it in 1955 and founded the Samukta Socialist Party (S.S.P.), but till his end remained a follower of Gandhi.

During the formative stage of the C.S.P. most of the C.S.P. members were critical of Gandhi and dissatisfied with his methods. Gandhi was never in favour of dispossessing the propertied class, he believed in converting them so that they hold their property 'in trust' for their tenants and use them for their welfare. Gandhi stood for coordination and cooperation of capital and labour, landlord and tenant.<sup>50</sup> Gandhi, thereby, was suggesting that the Zamindars need not be afraid of the Congress. For him a revitalised village should be the basic social unit. Socialists, Gandhi thought, were introducing an alien system into India and thus popularising class war, besides he suspected industrialization as it would result in disrupting traditional village economy, thus adding to the misery of the rural population.<sup>51</sup> Jai Prakash referred to

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50. see. 'Why Socialism', J.P. Narain, pp. 87-89.

51. see. 'Modern Indian Political Thought', V.P. Verma, pp. 291-292.

Gandhi's philosophy as 'reformist' and 'curious', he saw in Gandhism nothing unique, similar ideas, held Jai Prakash, had been advocated in Europe by "Philosophers and Church Divines before the Industrial Revolution". A large number of Western writers, wrote Narain, had pleaded similarly that "class struggle was futile, labour and capital were interdependent and necessary for each other, ... revolutions were wasteful, a synthesis of the contending forces of society was a higher ideal than revolution, enlightened control of profits wages and prices was necessary and possible," and that the theory of trusteeship was desirable and proper. All these, Jai Prakash said, were familiar ideas which have been preached in the West by bourgeois professors, thinkers and churchmen.<sup>52</sup> Socialism, according to him, was 'an enquiry into the causes of "economic inequality, into the origins of feudal rule, the landlords, capitalists and paupers." Socialism, therefore, tries to find the root cause and seeks to remove it. The remedy is, he says, applied at the "material source of social evil."<sup>53</sup> Gandhi, he held, was not interested in enquiring as to why society was controlled by few princes and landlords and the majority of the population were in the category of paupers. He also questioned the Gandhian theory of harmony between capital and labour, by asking Gandhi as to how this harmony would take place. According to Narain, what is needed is a social revolution and not change of heart.<sup>54</sup>

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52. see. 'Why Socialism', Jai Prakash Narain, pp. 70-71.

53. Ibid., pp. 87-89.

54. Ibid. Jai Prakash Narain was much influenced by William Godwin's Book, "An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice". In his book 'Why Socialism', Narain extensively quotes Godwin to attack Gandhi and support his own stand.

Revisionist tendencies are also marked in the writings of these early socialist leaders. They interpreted Marxism to conclude that it was not opposed to Democracy and that Marx had not ignored the non-economic forces altogether. Acharya Narendra Dev, for instance, speaking at the Patna Conference said : "All that Marx means to say is that an idea can influence the course of history only when it realizes itself in fact and thus becomes a thing. He has nowhere considered the question of the relative importance of mind and matter. Both are equally important. Man cannot create anything independently of the objective situation nor can a given objective situation by itself produce a result derived by man without his active participation. He only used the expression to distinguish his method from the idealism of Hegel who denied the reality of the world of experience and only recognised the absolute idea. Marx does hold that many causes operate in the evolution of history ... . Marx has always held that what was originally derivative had the power of becoming an independent cause. Therefore, it is wrong to say that Marx recognized only one single cause of historical evolution."<sup>55</sup>

The C.S.P. leadership was also critical of Dr. Bhagwan Das's Ancient scientific socialism. Dr. Das in his book 'Ancient versus Modern scientific socialism', had put forward a scheme, according to which, the social, political and economic pattern should be based on ancient Hindu ideals as prescribed by Manu. In short, Dr. Das was of the view that Varnashram Dharma as prescribed by Manu was only suited to India and <sup>the</sup> only alternative to Modern

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55. see. 'Socialism And the National Revolution', N. Dev., pp. 20-21.

scientific Socialism. Dr. Das was of the view that : "Indian slogans should not be merely the material interpretation of history ... not class war but class reconciliation, not a classless society but a society of temperamental vocational classes justly coordinated, ... an equitability in the partition of different kinds of work and of corresponding appropriate sufficient recompense and incentive, nor the crushing of all individuality but the careful fostering of individual speciality in consonance with social solidarity, not a sudden and complete break with the past, but a continuity of the peculiar National Genius of the best ancient traditions; not the abolition of Religion and Property and Family ... but the indigenous and genuinely philosophical, psychological 'Ancient time tested scientific socialism' of the best Indian Tradition."<sup>56</sup> Jai Prakash and Sampurnanand called this scheme out of date and arbitrary. Sampurnanand suggested that the four-fold division had outlined its utility. Narain said : "in a world where society is governed by self and class interests, where the state is a conscious instrument of class rule, where senility is yoked to self-seeking with the aid of money-glands, the vision of Dr. Das seems too unreal and foreign indeed."<sup>57</sup>

In short the C.S.P. was conceived as a party within the Indian National Congress by those who were dissatisfied with the 'Rightest'

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56. see. Forward 'Ancient vrs Modern Socialism'.

See also p. 67.

57. see. 'Why Socialism', J.P. Narain, p. 122.



leadership in general and Gandhi's methods in particular.<sup>58</sup> Such a party, it was presumed, would on the one hand press the Congress to adopt more radical tactics in the nationalist anticolonialist struggle and on the other hand, the party would channelise its energies in giving Congress policies a socio-economic orientation. In other words, it was thought that the C.S.P. would create social basis for the extension of democracy. (Roy had been advocating a similar view for some time). Writing about the C.S.P. Prof. R.C. Majumdar rightly says : "The emergence of a Socialist Left Wing in the Congress, clearly noticeable in the Congress session of 1934, was a sure indication of the resurgence of the radical or left wing forces in the country. This was accompanied by a phenomenal awakening among the peasantry and the students and to some extent among the workers. ... The students' movement which had gone through many ups and downs in the past, was centralised under the leadership of the All India student Federation. The Congress Socialist Party began to rally the younger generation and also more radical elements inside the Congress and among the Indian people in general. For a time being, both Satyagraha or Civil Disobedience and revolutionary terrorism had lost their charm and in the vacuum created thereby, the Congress Socialist Party naturally made headway<sup>59</sup>...". The above quotation makes it clear

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58. However much the CSP leaders condemned Gandhi they were indirectly influenced by him. Narain and Ashok Mehta condemned the use of violence, Narain was also critical of the policy of 'collectivisation' as pursued in Soviet Union. See 'Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy', Jai Prakash Narain, pp. 3-4. Similar views were expressed by Ashok Mehta. See 'Studies in Asian Socialism', pp. 20-21.

59. See. "Struggle for Freedom", History and Culture of the Indian People, Volume XI, Chapter XXIII, p. 557.

that however heterogeneous in character the C.S.P. was, its formation as a left wing inside the Congress was a far reaching event. And in the period 1935-1940, it emerged as a force to be reckoned with. In the succeeding years its impact is seen on a number of decisions of the Congress.

There is much similarity between the views of Roy (after returning to India) and the programme, Plan and ideology of the Congress Socialist Party. In fact, all that the C.S.P. stood for Roy had said earlier, e.g., broadening the social basis of the Congress Party by going to the peasants; giving the Congress programme a socio-economic orientation, to endeavour for unity in the labour front, criticism of Gandhian methods and policies etc. A socialist goal and achieving independence were identical demands raised by the Royists and Congress Socialist Party, besides both wanted to oust the Congress of its rightist leadership thus free the party from reactionary policies.<sup>60</sup> As stated in the previous chapter, Roy wanted to gain control of the Congress by capturing it at the grass root level (he had suggested formation of Congress Committees at the village level). In other words, Roy believed that extension of the social basis of the Party (Congress) would lead to its radicalization. The C.S.P. which had come into existence for realizing somewhat a similar adjective wanted to unify all left forces. "The problem of socialist Unity", wrote Jai Prakash, "meant the coming together of all groups and individuals who stand by Marxism."<sup>61</sup> Therefore the CSP particularly ..

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60. See. Roy's views in the last chapter and for the CSP N. Dev's speech at Patna in 'Socialism and National Revolution', p. 4. It has been referred earlier also.

61. See. 'Socialist Unity and the CSP', J.P. Narain, p. 3.

favoured such unity with the Communists and Royists.<sup>62</sup> In his presidential address to the Bengal Congress Socialist Party, Jai Prakash Narain suggested that various left forces would have to work in concert if they desired to establish their hegemony over the nationalist forces.<sup>63</sup> "I firmly believe", he said, "that unless there is a fusion of the forces (leftist) ... our common object will remain unrealized. I exhort you to develop the greatest possible co-operation with the groups that our working for the same object as ourselves. We have to work together in promotion of identical ideals, keeping in mind the day we shall all come closer and merge into one organization."<sup>64</sup> Narain's call for unity was well responded and within a year most Royist joined the CSP. The Royists of Calcutta were the first to join the CSP. Rajini Mukerjee and Dharma Das Goovardhan both of whom were Royists became members of the Bengal C.S.P.<sup>65</sup> In Bombay, Charles Mascarenhas, Maniben Kara, R.A. Khedgikar, Dr. M.K. Shetty, V.B. Karnik, Tayab Shaikh, all essentially Royists but they cooperated with the C.S.P. particularly in the trade union field. The Royists also cooperated with the Gujrat, Punjab and Sind branches of the C.S.P. V.M. Tarkunde one of the Roy's most loyal followers was

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62. See. 'The Communist Party of India', Masani, p. 67.

63. See. 'Towards Struggle', J.P. Narain, pp. 132-135.

64. Ibid.

Roy's writings, particularly 'India in Transition' influenced Narain much in the 20's in the USA. Narain's Marxist learnings were to guide an extent fashioned by Roy. Throughout the 20's Narain remained an admirer of Roy.

65. See. 'Communism and Nationalism in India', Haithur, p. 229...

Secretary of the Maharashtra C.S.P., besides H.R. Mahajani, G.P. Khare, R.K. Khadolkar and Y.B. Chavan (at present Foreign Minister in Mrs. Gandhi's Cabinet) all of them were Royists but played an important role in the C.S.P. then. In Ahmedabad, Thakore Prasad Pandya and Dashrath Lal Mohan Lal Thakur (Royists) were active in the C.S.P. In Kerala, A.K. Pillai, a Royist was a founder member of the C.S.P. All these persons were intellectually active within the CSP and during the early years (1934-36) of the CSP they made notable contribution in shaping its policies. In the last chapter it was pointed out that the main demand of the Royist was, that Indians should have the right to frame their own constitution by convening a Constituent Assembly. At the first All India Conference of the C.S.P. held in Bombay, 1934, a resolution was passed as follows : "The right of framing the Constitution is the sovereign right of the Indian people and the supreme authority which should promulgate the Constitution of India is the National Constituent Assembly."<sup>66</sup> The point is that the Roy group influenced the CSP policies in the early years. The British Intelligence report supports our view point. The Report says : "The business before it (reference here is to the All India Congress Socialist Conference held at Bombay) included consideration of the steps to be taken to secure a united front with M.N. Roy's followers, and it was evident that both they and the official communists were out to influence the proceedings each in its own particular way. Roy's disciples triumphed and the programme which the Congress socialists eventually produced came very near

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66. See. "Role of the C.S.P. in Indian National Congress 1931-42", Rusch, p. 335.

to that which Roy had in mind for a number of years past."<sup>67</sup> This becomes further clear (in fact it leaves no room for doubt) if we compare the All India Congress Socialist Party Programme as passed at the Bombay Conference with the draft resolution of Fundamental Rights which was drafted by M.N. Roy before the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress.<sup>68</sup>

Certain letters written secretly by Roy to his sympathisers while he was in prison also prove that he exercised much influence on the C.S.P. These letters do not bear his name but the contents clearly reveal that these were written by him, for instance, in one of the letters he wrote ; "On this point I went to the extent of disagreeing with the entire leadership of the Communist International, ... it is unfortunate that I am deprived of the opportunity of joining you in this fateful movement."<sup>69</sup> In another he wrote ; "It is becoming increasingly clear that our party has to develop through the C.S.P. The danger lies in exposing ourselves. Congress Socialism must be kept as such and must not be mistaken for communism ... . The Government has already sensed it and is exposing us to the frightened bourgeoisie, who will drive us out of the Congress. We have to be more cautious in the future in discussing about the future of our Party."<sup>70</sup> During the summer

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67. See. Government of India, Home Deptt. 1935, p. 225.

68. For comparison the C.S.P. programme and the resolution drafted by Roy are quoted in full at the end of the chapter.

69. Neither the date nor name has been mentioned in the letters. The passage quoted is from the Intelligence Report.

See. 'Govt. of India, Home Deptt.' 1935, p. 227.

70. Ibid. These letters were later published as 'Letters to the C.S.P.'

months of 1934, Roy in a series of secretly circulated letters, attached Gandhi and the Swarajists. He wrote : "The Congress now stood at a crossing of ways the alternative before it had been very aptly indicated by an important Congress leader as a relapse into liberalism or armed insurrection. The Mahatma's decision left no room for doubt that the present congress leaders had chosen the safe road - relapse into liberalism. The rank and file of the Congress must, therefore take immediate and unhesitating steps to turn this powerful body into "the organ of the new form of struggle, with a new programme, under new leadership inspired by a consciously revolutionary ideology." Further elaborating he said : "Mass discontent was there (greater because of the deterioration of the economic conditions of the workers, peasants and lower middle classes) and all that was needed was to turn that dynamic factor to the political account and to stimulate into an irresistible will to power, which must in its turn eventually develop into the final stage of armed insurrection. The preliminary stage would be composed of a variety of mass activity within the limits of established law, having as its basis the electrifying slogan : Land to the peasants, Bread to the workers manual as well as mental."<sup>72</sup> In another letter to sympathetic Congressmen (during the same period) Roy wrote : "That the justification of a purely socialist party working on more or less constitutional lines was that it educated, organized and led the working class to improve their political and economic conditions."<sup>73</sup> Though Roy had reservations about the success of such a party because any

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72. Ibid., p. 229.

73. Ibid.

improvement in the conditions of the working class presupposed a stage of capitalist prosperity, which was absent in India. Therefore, he was of the view that the party should be named "National Democratic Revolutionary Party."<sup>74</sup> However, he advised his supporters to work in the Congress, influence it, guide it and change its policies, so that eventually the left wing might come to predominate and the Congress thus be compelled to adopt a full programme of national democratic revolution. In the same letter he concluded; "Save the Congress as an organ of militant mass action, preserve it as a platform of the united anti-imperialist front and develop it as the leader of democratic national revolution."<sup>75</sup>

Thus, it becomes quite clear that Roy's influence was substantial among the leading personalities of the C.S.P. and that the programme and plan of action of the C.S.P. evolved on lines suggested by Roy. Unfortunately, most of the works relating to the period have dealt with the C.S.P. in length but these works have given little or no reference to Roy. Credit for organising and developing the socialist movement is often given to Jai Prakash Narain, Acharya Narendra Dev etc. Though it is absolutely clear that Roy had perceived the necessity of organizing the left wing and thus radicalizing the national movement much earlier.<sup>76</sup> Besides, Roy had 16 years of practical organizational experience abroad (he had helped to organise the Chinese revolution). There-

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74. Ibid.

75. Ibid. The British Intelligence Report says that M.N. Roy the 'evil genius' was in background of the C.S.P. See. Govt. of India, Home Deptt. 1935, p. 230.

76. See. 'Our Task in India', M.N. Roy, also last chapter.

fore, he was in a better position to lay down the lines on which the socialist movement ought to develop and that this he did becomes clear from the above quoted letters and the British Intelligence Report.<sup>77</sup>

The cooperation between the Royists and the C.S.P. was however limited and by the time of the Meerut Conference of the CSP (1936) it was clear that there were fundamental differences. At the inception of the C.S.P. Roy had hoped that the CSP would become, "the rallying ground of radical elements of the de-classed intellectuals -- the elements gradually heading towards the party of the proletariat." Thus, the cooperation he rendered by asking his supporters to join the CSP was with the purpose of "meeting them half way and guiding them forward."<sup>78</sup> Though he had doubts about the formation of a socialist Party inside the National Congress from the beginning. In the present political situation, the Congress machinery could not be captured under the "banner of socialism but under the banner of national revolution," he thought.<sup>79</sup> "The present political situation demands not the organization of a socialist party inside the Congress, a

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77. Nehru, Jaiprakash and other have made occasional references to his intellectual calibre but have not been honest in acknowledging his contributions towards the socialist movement in the 30's. Nehru wrote of him ; "I was impressed by his remarkable intellectual capacity ... ." Narain wrote ; "M.N. Roy introduced a section of discontented Indian intellectuals to the theory and practise of socialism. See. Nehru Autobiography, pp. 267-268 and Narain's, "From Socialism to Sarvodaya", p. 10.

78. See. 'Letters to the C.S.P.', M.N. Roy, pp. 52-53.

79. Ibid.,



party which by the logic of forces would inevitably be an important and isolated group, but the capture of the Congress as such by the radical rational revolutionary elements."<sup>80</sup> As said the CSP was heterogeneous in character and the socialism it preached was rather vague. Roy realizing this had felt that if the CSP would be left to itself it would degenerate into reformism. During his stay in China he had learned that a split in the reformist party is fundamental to the development of Communist Party. Therefore, he had suggested that the Royists should join the CSP and thereby split it and thus absorb the real proletarian elements, but he warned them not to merge with the C.S.P.<sup>81</sup> Jai Prakash Narain, on the other hand, was of the view that Royist would gradually merge with the CSP.<sup>82</sup> Differences were further heightened when in June 1936, a document was brought to the notice of CSP executive. The document had asked the Royists to liquidate the CSP.<sup>83</sup> Most of the Royists denied the authenticity of the document and the matter was therefore dropped and the Royists decided to work within the C.S.P. although their relations, henceforth, were rather cool.

In November 1936, Roy was released. His release was hailed with delight by all nationalists except the official communists.<sup>84</sup>

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80. Ibid., p. 16.

N.B. The U.S. Office of strategic services conducted a study during the war in India. It says, "There seems little doubt that the CSP was considerably influenced by Roy's programme.

See. Hilleox, op. cit., p. 230.

81. See. Hilleox, op. cit., p. 230.

82. See. 'Socialist Unity and the CSP', J.P. Narain, p. 4.

83. See. L.P. Sinha, op. cit., p. 416.

84. See. 'Memoirs', M.N. Roy, p. 593 (Epilogue).

The C.S.P. was rather enthusiastic about his release its leadership welcomed him and hoped that he would help to unite the socialist movement. Jai Prakash Narain was more or less certain that Roy would join the C.S.P. After his release Jai Prakash Narain met him and carried the impression that he would join the C.S.P. Roy though somewhat agreed with the work done by the C.S.P. had in mind two objections -- a) was it possible for a socialist party to exist openly in the Congress; b) what was the guarantee that such a socialist ever if it could exist might not turn reformist.<sup>85</sup> The CSP leaders tried to assure him that his objections were not well founded and that conditions which might lead to reformism were absent in India. However, Roy was not convinced and henceforth in his speeches and writings, he started attacking the C.S.P., and in Delhi in March 1937, he finally asked his followers not only to resign from the CSP but also to, "disrupt it and break it."<sup>86</sup> He also suggested that they should not resign immediately but at intervals so that an impression would be created that the C.S.P. was collapsing.<sup>87</sup> Following this the CSP executive met and a circular was issued which charged the Royists and CPI of 'fractionalism' and warned them of disciplinary action.<sup>88</sup> Charles Mascarenhas, Madam Shetty and Dr. M.R.

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85. See Sinha, op. cit., p. 416.

86. Ibid., p. 417.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid. Masani was in favour of immediate expulsion of Royists from CSP. See. Masani 'Communist Party of India', pp. 69-70.

Shetty (all Royists) were expelled. By August 1937, most of the Royists had resigned from the CSP. The resignation of the Royists was a set back to the cause of left unity. Jai Prakash Narain in his book, 'Socialist Unity and the Congress Socialist Party', has charged Roy for the failure of left wing unity. "After more than a year and a half of close cooperation our Royist friends have left us with a parting kick. The entire responsibility for disrupting the measure of unity that had been achieved must be laid at the door of the Royists above all of Shri Roy."<sup>89</sup>

It is true, that had Roy and his followers cooperated with the socialists the CSP would have been in a better position to influence and carry the Congress towards the desired goal, particularly so because Nehru then was very much sympathetic towards the Socialists. Roy, however, had his own reservations which also contained much truth. Firstly, Roy had been sceptical since the beginning as to the ideological commitments of the CSP leaders. As we have already shown, he was quite correct in this. Socialism for most of them (Acharya N. Dev and to some extent Jai Prakash were the only exceptions) was more of a fashion, better say, a political expedient. And secondly, Roy had enough vision to realize that by emphasizing socialism the party was merely paving the way for its own isolation. He realised that merely by emphasising on socialism would not lead to any change in party complexion it would on the other hand merely incite the orthodox Congressmen to attack them (socialists) and reduce their number --

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89. See. 'Socialist Unity and CSP', Narain, pp. 6-9.

"insistance upon keeping up the CSP will compel you to leave the Congress."<sup>90</sup> The soundness of Roy's approach is revealed in 1939 when it was recommended by a Congress Sub-Committee that groups which did not agree with Congress policies should be denied membership.<sup>91</sup> This recommendation was not accepted then but in 1948 the Congress Party Constitution was amended thus groups and parties opposed to Congress policies were denied membership. The socialists thus were compelled to leave the Congress (Gandhi was opposed to it).

Initially when the CSP was formed there was much similarity of views between the CSP and Royists, both had identical goals -- to gain independence and establish a socialist society. It was the question of priority that led to parting of ways. For Roy, by the time of his release, Independence assumed priority. To quote him ; "Socialism or Communism is not the issue of the day, the socialists and Communists should realise that the immediate objective is national independence, and for this the Congress is our common platform."<sup>92</sup> This is not to suggest that Roy after his release abandoned the goal of socialism which he had been pleading throughout. Roy now suggested that Independence should precede socialism. In other words, Independence he thought created the necessary conditions for socialism. Therefore, on being released he joined the Indian National Congress at Bareilly, and was

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90. See. 'Letters to C.S.P.', M.W. Roy, p. 29.

91. A.I.C.C. News letter, June 15, 1939 referred in Haitheox, op. cit. See Notes Chapter Eleven.

92. See. 'Letters to the CSP', p. 59. This was said by him on being released.

elected to the annual party conference to be held at Faizpur in December.<sup>93</sup> In the mean while he was given a warm welcome by Congressmen wherever he went.<sup>94</sup> At Faizpur, Nehru in his Presidential Address not only welcomed him but also praised him highly saying that he was, "one of the bravest and ablest of Indian sons of the present generation."<sup>95</sup> Even the attitude of the Right Wing leaders like Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Acharya Kriplani was not hostile if not favourable. They were seriously concerned about the gradual growth of the left wing and as Roy now was opposed to the formation of such left parties within the Congress they thought cooperation with Roy could be possible (atleast the Roy group they thought would prove more cooperative in comparison to the socialists).<sup>96</sup>

It is true that the radical ideas that Roy held, had been shelved for the time being. For instance he was now suggesting that the peasants and workers should enter the Congress just as individual members. Only active participation of the workers could transform the congress into an effective organ of national struggle. (The C.S.P. and the communists had suggested that they should enter only if collective affiliation was granted). Roy was of the view that only a, "minor section of the Indian workers and peasants was organised, therefore, collective affiliation would 'touch' this minor section only."<sup>96a</sup> On account of such

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93. See - Memoirs, M.N. Roy, p. 594. See also Sinha, Op. cit., p. 436.

94. Roy stayed at Anand Bhawan for a week after his release as Nehru's guest, at Faizpur he was putting up next to Nehru and was elected to the membership of A.I.C.C.

95. Sinha, op. cit., p. 436.

96. See Haitheox, op. cit., p. 248.

96a See- "On stepping out of Jail", M.N. Roy, p. 11.

views the C.S.P. leadership regarded him as one who had moved into the rightist camp. The socialists, Roy thought, should work in the Congress as a class or better say 'nebulous group' rather than a party. As a nebulous group the socialists should channelise their energier in putting forward an alternative programme to the Gandhian programme of national revolution. The C.S.P. as a party within the Congress he thought would achieve nothing but merely divide the congress into socialists and non-socialists.<sup>97</sup>

The socialist leaders naturally could not appreciate these views of Roy, more particularly the idea of dis-membering the C.S.P. Acharya Narendra Dev, in particular, took note of these views of Roy and critically replied ; "the role of the C.S.P. has been recently discussed ... the writer (Roy) discusses the question with sympathy and welcomes the party but suggests that the party can be effective only if it liquidated itself and merely functions as the left wing of the Congress. It is stated that the Congress cannot be expected to accept socialism as its objective, and therefore the talk of socialism within the Congress would render a positive disservice to the cause of anti imperialist struggle. I personally agree that the congress is not a platform for socialism and its main task is to develop anti-imperialist struggle. But we should not forget that under present conditions, such a struggle will only develop if he will succeed in linking it up with the economic demands of the masses and this object can only be achieved if there is a party within the. -

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97. See. "Letters to the C.S.P.", M.N. Roy, pp. 30-60, particularly, pp. 36, 37, 41, 42.

Congress that persistently agitates for the acceptance of an economic programme. I also hold that there is an urgent necessity for carrying on an incessant propaganda. For socialism amongst the congress workers, for the more we succeed in this direction the better are the chances for the acceptance by the Congress of an effective programme of anti-imperialist in struggle. And for this reason, if for no other, the party must continue to function. This urgent and much needed task cannot be performed by a diffused group and I think our experience of the last twelve months amply justifies the course we have followed."<sup>98</sup> In the same speech, Narendra Dev suggested that certain modifications are necessary in the party's programme and policies. By and large the C.S.P. leadership gradually became more suspicious of Roy's motives and thought that Roy had made deliberate attempts to destroy the party. This ultimately led to the final break when Roy directed his followers to resign from the party.

Analysing the causes of the failure of left wing unity Jai Prakash Narain in his book, "socialist unity and the Congress Socialist Party" rightly says -- "the basic difficulty in the path of unity was the ridiculous idea held by every miserable little party that it alone was the real Marxist Party and that every other party had therefore to be exploited, captured or destroyed. The Roy group was also a votary of this inflated

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<sup>98</sup> See. Presidential Address of Acharya N. Dev, delivered at Gujarat, Ahmedabad, June 23 - 24 - 1935, in "Socialism and the National Revolution, p. 77.

creed. It was natural for it, therefore, to consider the development of another socialist party as unnecessary and harmful. It was much better to have a left platform which could animate and dominate."<sup>99</sup>

An effort has been made to show the interaction between Roy's ideas and the C.S.P. In this connection we have analysed the early links and subsequent breakdown. However, from the above analysis it has not been possible to pin-point the exact reasons for their break. In other words, it has not been possible to precisely conclude as to whom should be blamed. The reason probably is that on the part of Roy there is much confusion and contradiction in his views during the period. This is evident from the letters he wrote to the C.S.P. It appears from these letters that he had not been able to make up his mind. To some extent also, the attitude of the C.S.P. has been vacillating. However, from the above analysis, one can conclude that the variable (that is, the difference in ideology and issues) between Roy and C.S.P. were more or less constant from 1934-36, therefore it cannot be concluded that ideological differences brought about the final split (Roy was always sceptical about the socialism of the C.S.P.). The point is important as socialists have off and again emphasised the ideological differences (for instance, Narain and Masani).<sup>100</sup> There were, no doubt, certain ideological differences for instance attitude regarding the Congress or

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<sup>99</sup>. See. *Socialist Unity and the Congress Socialist Party* - J.P. Narain, pp. 5, 6.

<sup>100</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6; see also "Communism in India", M.R. Masani, pp. 53, 54.



participation in the election; holding offices, too much reliance on Nehru by the CSP leadership was not much appreciated by Roy, but these differences were rather minor and besides they existed from the beginning. In other words, it was not the lack of agreement on basic issues which ultimately divided the Royists and the CSP but it was the question of preserving their own identity (which both genuinely desired) and this implied preserving their own parties. A distinct party serves a greater psychological need to the rank and file leadership than the advantage of having a single party. Merger would have implied dissolution of the Roy group in the CSP. Recent studies relating to party Politics in India clearly indicate that in India, "the prestige of a leader depends upon the allegiance which he received from his group, so that preservation of the group is essential to his position."<sup>101</sup> It is probably for this reason that Roy asked his followers to leave the CSP. This is also true of the post independence efforts by various left wing leaders to create an united front. In short, group allegiance is too powerful a psychological

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101. See - Myron Weiner - "Party Politics in India" see Ch. 7 - 'An attempt at left wing unity'. The author has well analysed the factors which hinder the idea of left wing unity. The author at one place rightly says : "The party provides both an alternative set of values and an alternative social structure ... . Indians do not have multiple group membership, party members therefore tend to be uncompromising in their attitude towards other parties ... . Indian Parties are frequently torn by two desires, one on the one hand they want to work more closely with other parties or even merge in order to improve their electoral prospects but on the other hand they fear that the identity of their group would be lost. The result is often a vacillating policy of uncompromising attacks against other opposition parties and passionate call for unity." See p. 8.

barrier at left wing unity in India even to day.<sup>102</sup>

Although the CSP leadership did accept or appreciate Roy's idea of dissolving the party, they were however influenced by Roy views on other issues. In January 1936 the annual conference of the CSP was held at Meerut. In the Conference, a change is clearly to be noticed. It was said at the conference that the task of the party was not to convert the 'Congress Party' into a socialist party but into a multi class anti imperialist front. The implication is clear that the CSP leadership realized that nationalism should be given priority over socialism, (a view point that Roy had been suggesting) though the idea of dissolving the CSP was not agreed upon.

In the following years, that is before and after the Faizpur session of the Indian National Congress Roy made all efforts to activate and democratise the Indian National Congress in order to make it an effective instrument of national revolution. But unfortunately, he could not carve a significant place for himself within the Indian National Congress. The CSP had gradually become a vehement critic of Roy, and within the Congress in the following years the CSP was rather active. The Socialists had the support and backing of Nehru who then stood forth as a champion of socialism. Nehru, in the mid thirties, as Brecher rightly says, was the, 'hero of the left'.<sup>103</sup> In fact, when the CSP was formed in 1934 it relied heavily on Nehru and when the old guard in the Congress attacked the CSP Nehru often came to

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102. Ibid., pp. 153 to 163.

103. See - Brecher, Op. cit., pp. 212-227.

their rescue and acted as CSP God father.<sup>104</sup> Though Nehru never directly associated himself with the party but the CSP did look towards him for guidance and leadership.<sup>105</sup> while the Socialists attached Roy, the Rightist group on the other hand, suspected him although they had sound reasons to suspect him as Roy thought, had been a vehement critic of the Indian cultural tradition and Gandhi (we shall examine his relations with Gandhi a little later). In fact, Roy remained (as we shall observe later) what Nehru rightly said of him, "a lovely figure deserted by everyone."<sup>106</sup>

The Congress till about the mid 30's had virtually ignored the peasants. Even among the eleven demands that Gandhi put forward before the Civil Disobedience movement only 2 related to the peasants -- a) reduction of land tax by 50% and abolition of salt tax.<sup>107</sup> However, there was a growing realization that the peasant's cause had been neglected. This was particularly realized by the socialists. Thus during the mid thirties we witness various independent Kisan Organizations coming up and by 1935 there were peasants organizations in Bengal, Bihar, United Provinces, C.P., Kerala, Gujarat and Punjab.<sup>108</sup> Once the process

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104. Brecher, Op. cit., p. 218.

105. For instance Acharya N. Dev in his first Presidential Address at Patna, May 17, 1934, said, "... My task is made more difficult by the absence of our beloved friend, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, whose valuable advice and guidance would have been of immense value to us on this occasion."

See - 'Socialism and the National Revolution, p. 3 and also p. 199 last chapter.

106. See - Nehru Autobiography, p. 262.

107. See - Sinha, Op. cit., pp. 388-390.

108. Ibid.

started it swiftly gained momentum, it was also thought that a peasant movement should be organized on an all India scale. In 1935, several peasant leaders belonging to different parties, formed a peasant group of MLA's in the Central Legislative Assembly, in order to, "create a public opinion from the forum of the Legislative Assembly on various peasant problems."<sup>109</sup> This was followed by the All India Peasant's and Workers' Conference which met in October 1935, in South India. On the other hand, in Bihar, socialists like Jai Prakash and Sahajanand Saraswati wanted a more representative All India Peasant's Conference to discuss the issue. The proposed Conference met in April, 1936. It was the first All India Kisan Conference and was presided by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati (It coincided with the second CSP Annual Conference). The substance of the various demands put forward was that exploitation of the peasants should come to an end. This was followed by the Second All India Kisan Conference which met at Faizpur at the time of the Annual Session of the Indian National Conference. At the session it also changed its name to All India Kisan Sabha. The socialists were wholeheartedly behind the All India Kisan Sabha. In fact, they took the lead in organizing it (In this the Communists also supported them). The growing strength of the All India Kisan Sabha made it evident that in course of time the organization would pose itself as a rival to the Congress. It was quite obvious that the Kisan Sabhas with their more radical demands would attract more peasants than

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109. This was said by N.G. Ranga, the founder Secretary -  
 See - N.G. Ranga "Kisans and Congress", p. 60.  
 N.B.: As referred earlier Roy had taken up the peasants cause in the United Provinces before being arrested.

primary Congress Committees.<sup>110</sup> The Communists and more particularly the Socialists were rather happy about the development because they anticipated these Sabhas developing into a class organization, thus their influence would be increased at the grass root level, which they thought would help them subsequently to capture the national movement. Thus, the socialists at the Lucknow session of the Congress proposed, that the party constitution should be so amended that collective affiliation of peasants and workers could be possible. Nehru who presided the session himself proposed such a suggestion. It was not accepted but a Mass contacts Committee was appointed.<sup>111</sup> The Provincial Congress Committees were also asked to make recommendations regarding agrarian problems. Although the suggestion of collective affiliation was not accepted but the appointment of a Mass.

110. The minimum demands of the All India Kisan Sabha were :  
 1) Cancellation of all arrears of rent and revenue;  
 2) Abolition of Land Revenue Assessment and rent from uneconomic holdings; 3) Reduction of atleast 50% of rent and revenue; 4) Immediate grant of the right of permanent cultivation; 5) Graduated income tax, death duty and inheritance tax upon all agricultural revenue of landlords and merchants; 6) Money lenders to be licenced; 7) Minimum wages for agricultural workers; 8) Fair price for sugarcane etc.; 9) Development of irrigation and drainage facilities; 10) Establishment of Village Panchayats; 11) Adult franchise.  
 See - Sinha, Op. cit., pp. 392-393.

That the Kisan Sabha was becoming a powerful organization is evident from its growing strength. In May 1938, its membership stood at 600,000 and by April 1939, it reached 800,000.

111. See - Sinha, op. cit., p. 431. Apart from the Mass Contact Committee a Agrarian Sub-Committee and a labour sub-Committee was also appointed to report on their problems.  
 Ibid.

Contact Committee was a clear indication that the socialists did exercise considerable pressure. The question was again taken up at the Faizpur session, though it was not accepted here also. However, the Congress at Faizpur was compelled to accept a 13 point agrarian programme. The main demands were : Reduction of rents and land revenue, scaling down debts, abolition of forced labour and feudal dues; a living wage for agricultural workers and right for peasants union etc.<sup>112</sup> (Most of these demands were already put forward by Roy in his minimum programme).

Roy was totally opposed to the idea of collective affiliation of peasants and workers in the Congress. He was of the view that admission of such class organizations into the Congress would lead to fragmentation, thereby weakening the national movement. In his letters to the CSP, he is of the view that a party which is composed of various autonomous organizations would not be strong enough to lead the 'revolutionary struggle for the capture of power'.<sup>113</sup> He did not think it necessary for the peasantry to have their own separate class organizations. Their demands, he thought, could be met within the framework of the nationalist movement. He also thought that the Indian peasantry, as a whole, was not organized and as only a minor section was organized collective affiliation would benefit this small group only.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, at the Faizpur session he suggested

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112. Ibid.

N.E.: Due to the opposition of Roy and the Right Wing Nehru at Faizpur was not very enthusiastic about collective affiliation, though earlier at Lucknow he had favoured the idea.

113. See - 'Letters to the CSP', M.N. Roy, p. 17.

114. See - 'On stepping out of jail', M.N. Roy, pp. 10-11.

that instead of collective affiliation the Congress should adopt a agrarian programme to satisfy the peasants. This agrarian programme should aim at, the abolition of Landlordism; nationalization of land, abolition of all taxes - direct or indirect except land tax and liquidation of rural indebtedness.<sup>115</sup>

It appears from Roy's work "Revolution and counter Revolution in China", that he was suspectful of the peasantry's capacity to lead the revolution, though he agreed that an agrarian revolution was essential for the success of the revolution but maintained that urban proletarian hegemony is essential. In Revolution and Counter Revolution in China, he writes : "... The peasantry could not carry the revolution to the cities. That should have been known before hand. However, it was proved by experience."<sup>116</sup> Roy undoubtedly, was influenced by Lenin and his views regarding the peasantry reflect Lenin's profound impact on him. Lenin was of the view that separate peasants organizations were not necessary. "The Proletariat", Lenin wrote, "is really a revolutionary class and acts in a really socialistic manner only when it comes out as the vanguard of all the working and exploited people, as their leader in the struggle for the overthrow of the exploiters, this cannot be achieved unless the class struggle is

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115. See - 'Our Task in India', M.N. Roy, pp. 110-111.

116. See - "Revolution and Counter Revolution in China", M.N. Roy. In the last chapter Roy has analysed the causes of the failure of the Chinese Revolution. It reflects his prejudice towards the peasantry, pp. 640-641. However, improving the conditions of the peasantry he thought was essential because that would increase the purchasing power thus help industrial development.  
See - Tayab Shaikh, Op. cit., pp. 200-204.

carried into the countryside, unless rural working classes are united behind the Communist Party of the urban proletariat, and unless they are trained by the proletariat." ... "There is no salvation for the working masses of the countryside except in alliance with the communist proletariat and unless they give the latter devoted support in its revolutionary struggle to throw off the yoke of the land owners and the bourgeoisie."<sup>117</sup>

From Lenin's, 'Preliminary Draft Thesis on the Agrarian Question', it is evident that he relied heavily on the urban proletariat and therefore did not encourage separate organizations of peasants.<sup>118</sup> Influenced by Lenin, Roy also wanted to convert the Congress into a party of petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and urban proletariat under the hegemony of the urban Proletariat. Such being his views he was bound to oppose the collective affiliation of peasants and workers as a class organization within the Congress, which was favoured by the Communists and the Socialists. Roy, therefore, sided with the Rightists in opposing the CSP and CPI demand for affiliating the workers and peasants within the Congress. This was a major issue at Faizpur. The demand of collective affiliation was dropped. Roy however, suggested that Primary Congress Committees should be strengthened so that they become platforms to express local grievances, these grievances

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117. See - The Preliminary Draft Thesis on Agrarian Question in Lenin's collected Works, Vol. 37, pp. 152-164.

118. Ibid., pp. 152-153. In contrast Mao Tse Tung has relied heavily on the peasantry and has successfully accomplished the revolution with their aid. Roy was closer to Lenin.



should then be submitted to the PCC and the PCC in turn should forward them to the AICC, so that these can be studied by the entire party at the annual conferences. It was in this way Roy thought the Congress ought to broaden its base rather than encourage various class organizations within the Party.<sup>119</sup> The PCC was to establish and strengthen the primary Congress Committees in all villages and wards. The Kisan Sabhas, Roy thought would only rival the Congress Committees in the rural areas. In other words, they would make the task of the primary Congress Committees more difficult which Roy sought to develop into peasant bodies reflecting the will of the peasants.<sup>120</sup> Roy had realized that it would be difficult for the Indian National Congress to function simultaneously as a national organization and as an organization of the peasants as well. And this exactly happened during the years 1937-1939, when provincial ministries were formed. In Bihar, these developed sharp differences between the Kisan Movement and the Congress. The Kisan leader Swami Sahajanand Saraswati charged the Congress of being sympathetic towards the landlords and peasants. During the years 1937-1938 the Kisan Sabhas frequently took recourse to strikes protests processions etc.<sup>121</sup> This becomes rather clear if we note that in 1938 alone there occurred 379 strikes (This figures was the highest since 1921).<sup>122</sup> By and large the Kisan Sabhas functioned

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119. See - *Stepping out of Jail*, M.N. Roy, p. 5. See also Sinha, *Op. cit.*, pp. 435-440. At the Faizpur session Roy was an aspirant for the post of organizing Secretary. But neither Nehru nor Gandhi favoured him.

120. See - Y.B. Karanik, "Collective Affiliation", p. 17.

121. See - H.G. Ranga, 'Kisan and Congress', p. 22.

122. See - Sinha, *O.P.cit.*, p. 442. It is interesting to note that some provincial Congress Committees were sympathetic towards these strikes and peasants protests. *Ibid.*

in opposition to Congress Committees. The Red flag of the Kisan Sabha became a challenge to the National Flag.<sup>123</sup> Amidst such an atmosphere of mutual distrust that the Haripur session of the Indian National Congress was held. It was presided by Subhash Chandra Bose. There was a bitter attack on the policies of the Left. A resolution was passed which declared that the Congress fully recognized the right of the Kisans to organize in their Sabhas but clearly stated that the Congress would not associate itself with any activities which were incompatible with its essential principles.<sup>124</sup> The provincial committees were asked to take action in this direction. Gandhi was of the view that the Kisan Sabhas were weakening the Congress rather than strengthening it. The question of affiliating the Kisan and Workers was again brought forth but could not be passed.<sup>125</sup> The Haripura session was a very important session. Many important issues came up which, strictly speaking, are outside the scope of our work. However, a passing reference could be made. There was for instance, the problem of adjusting the relationship between the newly appointed Congress ministries and the Governors in certain provinces or the problem of the Congress relationship with the people of Indian States.<sup>126</sup> The Haripura session met at a time when war clouds were cast over the European Continent and it was clear that European States were again heading towards a major war.

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123. Ibid., p. 443. The Red Flag was adopted by the All India Kisan Sabha as a Symbol in 1938.

124. See - 'Struggle for Freedom', Vol. XII, p. 564.

125. See - Sinha, Op. cit., p. 443.

126. See - 'Struggle for Freedom', Vol. XII, pp. 564-565.

The Congress, well aware of the developments on the continent, passed a resolution. The operative part of the resolution read : "India can be no party to such an imperial war and will not permit her men power and resources to be exploited in the interests of British Imperialism. Nor can India join any war without any express consent of her people. The Congress, therefore, entirely disapproves of war preparations being made in India and large scale manoeuvres and air-raid precautions by which it has been sought to spread an atmosphere of approaching war in India. In the event of an attempt being made to involve India in a war, this will be resisted."<sup>127</sup> This resolution was not favoured by Gandhi and Nehru. In fact, the year 1938 saw a widening of the gulf between the two wings of the Congress.<sup>128</sup> It became clear in this session that there were fundamental differences between Subhash Bose and the Gandhi-Nehru group in their attitude towards Britain. Subhash Bose was of the view that the War was a God sent opportunity which India should exploit to her advantage. He believed in the dictum : "that England's necessity was India's opportunity."<sup>129</sup> Gandhi and Nehru were opposed to the taking of any advantage from such a situation. In the following months Gandhi-Bose relations were further strained.

Although Roy had been opposing collective affiliation he however, favoured the Congress contesting elections and accepting offices (The C.S.P. was not). The elections he thought would

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127. Ibid., p. 565.

128. Ibid., p. 565.

129. Ibid.

provide an opportunity for popularizing a more radical programme of action which would help in the development of mass agitation in support of a number of concretely formulated minimum demands. "Indeed there are several advantages in doing so (entering legislatures) -- speeches in the assembly can be more effective than those outside, elections present an opportunity of popularizing programmes; and the technical questions of illegality can be more easily settled inside than outside, besides it helps in the channelisation of Mass energy towards a definite goal."<sup>130</sup> In 1937 the CSP along with Nehru was opposed to the idea of contesting elections. Nehru, however, changed his mind but the CSP (although it did not oppose elections) opposed the formation of ministries and the socialists refused to accept offices when ministries were formed. There is no doubt that had the Socialists accepted offices they could have had the additional advantage of pushing forward their programme in the Provincial Governments and the Congress Party.<sup>131</sup> The Socialists were of the view that combatting the new constitution was the fundamental Congress policy and as such the acceptance of office was inconsistent with it. This, however, was not accepted and on Gandhi's insistence Nehru and the Congress finally decided to accept offices. "Nothing is more remarkable in the history of the next decade (1935 - 1945) than the gradual conversion of Nehru, step by step and stage by stage to the views and practices of Gandhi."<sup>132</sup>

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130. See - British Intelligence Report, 1935, pp. 228-29.

131. See - U.P. Kar Nik, "The L.R.C. Line", pp. 403-404.

132. See - 'Struggle for Freedom', Vol. XI, p. 559.

At this stage it becomes necessary to pause and reflect as to why Roy favoured the Congress going in for elections and accepting offices. Probably he thought that by accepting offices the leadership would neglect the organizational work, the advantage of which could be taken by the left radical elements. Secondly, he also thought that the class character of the Congress party would come in the way of implementing radical socio-economic measures and the party would thus be exposed. In other words, Roy sought to utilize the Congress Party as a stepping stone to power by capturing it at the grass root level and exposing it at the leadership level. And this precisely happened. At the Haripur session and the following Tripura session, there was much criticism of the Congress Party, primarily because the Congress could not live upto its promises. There was a general feeling that between the Congress and the Roy there was little difference. Gradually the gap between the radical wing and the conservative wing widened which culminated in the split of 1939 at Tripura.<sup>133</sup>

At the Tripura session the crisis reached its climax. Bose was elected President against Gandhi's wishes. He won by a narrow majority of 95 votes.<sup>134</sup> Gandhi did not attend the session as he was recovering from a fast he had undertaken. In his absence Pandit Pant moved a resolution, it read ; "In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the

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133. Ibid., p. 565.

134. Ibid., p. 566.

Congress and the country to victory during such crisis, the Congress regards it as imperative that the Congress Executive should command his implicit confidence and requests the President to nominate the working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhijee."<sup>135</sup> The resolution, referred to as the 'Pant Resolution', was adopted by the subjects Committee and also at the open session. The resolution was in other words a non-confidence vote against Bose and his supporters. It is interesting to note that the socialists had agreed with Bose in his policies but had abstained from voting. In fact their vote was decisive. Bose himself acknowledged that if the socialists had voted against the 'Pant resolution' it would not have been passed.<sup>136</sup> Roy also condemned them, but for their attitude the radicals would have won.<sup>137</sup> The differences between Bose and Gandhi widened and ultimately Bose resigned and Dr. Rajendra Prasad was made President.

After the Tripura Session the Royists withdrew from the Congress organization and formed the League of Radical Congressmen (L.R.C.) with the object of "combatting Gandhist ideology and raising the historic banner of Jacobinism."<sup>138</sup> The League of

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135. Ibid., p. 569. See - also Sinha, Op. cit., p. 449.

136. See - Nehru, 'A Bunch of Old letters' - Bose to Gandhi, pp. 185 to 187, 355 to 356.

137. M.N. Roy - 'Lessons of Tripura Congress', pp. 213-217.

138. Ibid.

N.B. According to Roy the ideological aspect of L.R.C. was similar to Philosophical Radicalism and Political aspect to that of Jacobinism (The Royists often referred to themselves as Jacobins). Ideologically the L.R.C. were to be precursors of Marxism therefore, they could be termed Marxian.

See - 'Independent India', May 12, 1940.

Radical Congressmen did not merge with Bose's Forward Block but they did cooperate with the 'Left consolidation Committee'.<sup>139</sup> (The Left consolidation Committee, was somewhat a loose organization for coordinating leftist activities). But as differences developed between Roy and Bose therefore the Royists resigned from the Left Consolidation Committee. By November the Communists and the Socialists also withdrew from the Left Consolidation Committee.<sup>140</sup>

Between the years 1938-40, the left radicals emerged as a major political group, the election of Bose as President is a clear indication of it. But because of their vacillating attitude they could not sustain their position. They neither backed the Congress wholeheartedly nor were they willing to render wholehearted support to Bose. Had the entire left remained in the Congress (as Roy had been suggesting) and had they voted in a united manner against the 'Pant Resolution' it is highly probable that the conservative leadership would have been dislodged. As shown earlier, the character and composition of the socialist party was heterogenous, therefore, they were never unanimous on a line of action to be pursued. Ultimately, they refused to join Bose and remained in the Congress, but with the withdrawal of Bose their strength and influence was considerably reduced and subsequently they found themselves in a weak and isolated position within the Congress Party.<sup>141</sup> Looking back we can say with

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139. See - Sinha, op. cit., pp. 966-968.

140. Ibid.

141. See - Myron Weiner "Party Politics in India", pp. 50-54.

a certain amount of certainty that in the years immediately preceeding the war, had the Socialists followed Roy's mature advise, that is wholeheartedly supporting the Congress and accepting offices in Provincial Governments they would have advanced considerably. In short, we can conclude that by ignoring Roy's advise, by committing various errors in strategy and tactics the left lost a winning battle. Besides these factors the greatest challenge to the left radical forces came from Gandhi. There is no doubt that Gandhi's political skills, and grasp over the national movement was far superior to the combined strength of the personalities of the left.

As stated earlier Roy was never able to properly identify himself with any group. The Socialists and the Communists (because of his views since the mid thirties) often described him as a "reactionary and counter-reactionary,"<sup>142</sup> the rightist similarly suspected him because of his past revolutionary role. Unfortunately, as an Indian nationalist Roy failed to establish his identity. Throughout his career Roy remained a persistent critic of Gandhi and in fact, he was never able to understand or appreciate Gandhi's hold on the national movement. Criticism of Gandhi implied in criticism of the Indian tradition.<sup>143</sup> Since the early twenties Roy had been critical of Gandhi he regarded him as socially reactionary and culturally revivalist. For instance in, "India in Transition" Roy writes ; "In the contemporary epoch outside India, Tolstoy has been the apostle of what Gandhi pro-

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142. See - Roy, "Our Differences", pp. 143-144.

143. Lenin on the other hand had been of the view that Gandhi was a revolutionary in so far as he was the leader of a nationalist anti-imperialist movement.



fesses ... . Gandhism is nothing but petty bourgeois humanitarism hopelessly bewildered in the clashes of the staggering forces of human progress. The crocodile tears of their humanitarianism are shed ostensibly by the undeniable suffering of the majority in the capitalist society, but they are really caused by the grief over the end of the old order, already destroyed or about to be so. It pines for that ancient golden age when the majority were kept in blissful ignorance in order that a few could roll in idle luxury, undisturbed by the revolt of the discontented, the spiritual culture of which was based on the barbarianism of the people at large, the simplicity of which was the sign of backwardness. This longing glance is due, in some cases, to the consummate intrigues of the forces of reaction, and in others to the involuntary subordination to the influence of the same agency. Its tendency towards a sort of religious or utopian socialism proves that Gandhism ... belongs to the latter category."<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the Twenties, when Roy was a member of the Comintern and later on returning to India Roy remained a consistent critic of Gandhi. Hinduism, for Roy, was a 'slave ideology' and Gandhi an 'ideological jailor', who advocated suffocating remedies like caste system, religious superstition and village life. The Indian spiritual heritage he maintained had resulted in, "political slavery for nearly a thousand years, economic backwardness, intellectual inertia and cultural degradation." The Indian people he said were the product of a, "decayed civilization awaiting a much delayed burial."<sup>145</sup> In his 'Independent India' (founded in

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144. See - 'India in Transition', M.N. Roy, pp. 207-208.

145. See - 'Fragments of a prisoner's diary', M.N. Roy, Vol. III, pp. 69-70.

April 1937) Roy consistently attacked Gandhi's doctrine of Ahimsa, which he thought was on the one hand a subtle intellectual device to conceal the extent of capitalist exploitation of the country and on the other hand, it induced the workers and peasants to remain contented with their lot. Social harmony which was implied in Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship, he thought was absurd, as the interests of the capitalists and workers could never harmonise. Nonviolence thought Roy hindered the development of a revolutionary movement among the people. In short, Roy could never appreciate the mixing of economics and religion into politics.<sup>146</sup> Roy also condemned Indian spiritualism which finds a significant place in the writings of Vivekanand, Aurobindo and even Gandhi. In fact, it was the spiritual aspect of Indian civilization that he wanted to change most and when any one talked highly of Indian spirituality he immediately concluded that it was an effort to revive the pre capitalist social condition. In, 'India's Message', Roy wrote : "The claim that the Indian people as a whole are morally less corrupt, emotionally purer, idealistically less worldly, in short spiritually more elevated, than the bulk of western society, is based upon a wanton disregard for reality."<sup>147</sup> As Gandhi identified himself with Indian spiritual and religious tradition, justified economic backwardness of the Indian people, Roy thought that, he (Gandhi) was idealized and was able to "exploit the veneration that is reserved for all religious

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146. See - 'Scientific Politics', M.N. Roy, p. 189.

147. See - 'India's Message in Fragments of a Prisoners Diary,' M.N. Roy, pp. 190-218.  
Referring to Gandhi's faith in Charka Roy wrote : "Gandhi was trying to convert a political organization like the congress into a spiritual organization".

leaders." In Gandhi, therefore, he found little coordinated thought or Philosophy. Gandhi always remained for Roy -- "a mass of platitudes and hopeless contradictions."<sup>148</sup> In another powerful passage he writes ; "The fact that even in the 20th century India is swayed by the native doctrines of Gandhi speaks for the cultural backwardness of the masses of her people ... . The fact is that the great bulk of the Indian people are steeped in religious superstitions. Otherwise, Gandhism would have no social background and would disappear before long ... . Gandhism sways the mass mind, not as a moral Philosophy but as a religious. He is neither a philosopher nor a moralist who has become the idol of the Indian people."<sup>149</sup> Holding such views it is obvious that Roy never fully realized Gandhi's hold on the masses and secondly that the national movement was dependent on him (This is also true of the communists and the socialists). Gandhi was not only attached to the Indian cultural and spiritual tradition but he also practised it, and at the same time he was aware, better say familiar, with western social and political values. In other words, Gandhi was one of the few leaders who realized that new

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148. Ibid.

149. Ibid.

N.B..In the first issue of 'Independent India' Roy bitterly attacked Gandhi. Following this Gandhi declared that Roy was his enemy number one. Roy was also of the view that appeals based on traditional values could only be religious in content. Therefore the nationalism that would emerge would prove dangerous as it would estrange a large Moslem minority. But till his death Roy maintained that Gandhi's appeal to Hindu tradition always remained a major cause for Moslem separatism. This information is revealed by a letter of Prof. Shanti Tangri to Haithcox referred in Haithcox, p. 256.

ideas in order to gain acceptance in a traditional bound society have to be presented in a familiar language. And this he did with the consequence, that on the one hand, he established his identity with the masses, while on the other hand he was always able to defeat his political opponents, whether they were within the congress or outside it. Recent political studies also support our stand that popularity in traditional societies cannot be achieved on basis of imported values or traditions. In simple words, populism to quite an extent is dependent upon identification with traditional values customs and the like.<sup>150</sup>

In India (then and even to-day) the words socialism and communism are loosely used and the general tendency, so far as the lay-man is concerned is to identify them with Westernization. Westernization itself is a term in India having various connotations, for instance, in a sense it refers to daily acts of individuals whether one eats Indian food or western, wear western clothes or Indian, speaks English rather than a vernacular language, one's attitude towards pre-arranged marriages; and, it also involves a rejection of the caste system. In short "rejection of a religious outlook and the acceptance of a scientific or rational outlook," is generally accepted by people as the ultimate criterion of Westernization.<sup>151</sup> Socialism, or for that matter any leftist ideology has been much appreciated by the western educated intellectual class in India. Needless to say

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150. See - Edward Shils, 'Political Development in the New States', pp. 20-25.

151. See - Weiner, Op. cit., pp. 168-169.

that this class has always been in minority. The majority has been sceptical towards leftist ideology, primarily because of its anti-religious and anti-traditional bias. In short, it is viewed by the majority as the anti-thesis of Hindu outlook.<sup>152</sup>

Roy, as stated, has spent a great part of his life (16 years) abroad having thus acquired western views and tastes, besides the teaching and writings of Marx which had added to his international outlook and made his approach towards traditional values and customs critical. The point is that despite having wholeheartedly indulged in the nationalist movement by joining the Indian National Congress, making various efforts to radicalize and democratize it by trying to give its policies a socio-economic orientation, Roy personally remained a failure. Although the soundness of his views and approach is revealed by the fact that the CSP and the Congress did by and large, accept them as already shown -- but paradoxically he himself remained isolated.

Before summing up the chapter, word is necessary about Nehru's socialism and his relations with Roy. In the previous chapter we had shown that Nehru was much fascinated by socialism in particular and Soviet Union in general. His articles on 'Soviet Union' and his Autobiography clearly reveal that emotionally he was attached to socialism. Since the late twenties, Nehru had been suggesting to make revolutionary charges in the

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152. This perhaps helps us to understand why Nehru often attempted justify progressive measures in traditional language. "In India there is a widespread belief in the sanctity of Indian history, and enormous pride in its centuries of tradition."

Ibid., p. 272.

social structure of society. "I must confess frankly that I am a socialist and a republican and am no believer in Kings and Princes ... ." We had stated earlier that he participated in the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels (Feb. 1927). It was here that he first came in contact with the orthodox Communists, left wing socialists and radical nationalists from Asia and Africa.<sup>153</sup> All along the early thirties his writings and speeches bear socialistic content e.g., the resolution on Fundamental Rights at the Karachi Congress, his views in 'Whether India' (1933) etc. Nehru during this period used Socialism not in a loose humanitarian sense but in an economic sense or what may be termed scientific socialism. "Socialism, I have told you", he wrote to Indira, "is of many kinds. There is a general agreement, however, that it aims at the control by the 'state' of the means of production that is land and mines and factories and the like, and means of distribution, like railways etc., and also banks and similar institutions. The idea is that the individual should not be allowed to exploit any of these methods or institutions or the labour of others to his own personal advantage."<sup>154</sup>

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153. "This conference was a milestone in the development of Nehru's political thought notably his espousal of socialism and broad international outlook ... . It was here that the goals of national independence and social reform became linked inextricably in his conception of future political strategy" - See Brecher, Op. cit., p. 109.

154. See - Glimpses of World History - Nehru, pp. 651-52. In 'Soviet Russia' written by Nehru in 1928, he expressed the view that Russian experiment was of greatest interest to India because conditions there were not dissimilar from conditions in India. p. 21.

When the CSP was formed in 1934 (already referred) the Socialists like Narain, Masani and Narendra Dev all had their hopes on him. Narendra Dev in his first Presidential Address at Patna acknowledged Nehru's absence with a sense of grief.<sup>155</sup> Masani also acknowledged it.<sup>156</sup> Nehru's ideas in 'Whither India' was a model for the Socialists.<sup>157</sup> In 1936, Nehru made his allegiance to socialism quite clear ; "The world was divided into two vast groups, namely, the imperialists and the fascists on the one side, and the socialists and the nationalists on the other, and Indian nationalists inevitably sided with those forces of the world which were ranged against fascism and imperialism."<sup>158</sup> He further said ; "When I use this word (socialism) I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific economic sense. It is, however, something more than an economic doctrine, it is a philosophy of life and as such it appeals to me. I see no other way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian States system... ."<sup>159</sup> But in the following years we witness a mellowing of Nehru's socialism and this becomes quite clear in 1939 when

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155. See - 'Socialism and the National Revolution', N. Dev, p. 3.

156. See - Masani, 'Communist Party of India', p. 65.

157. See - Breacher, Op. cit., p. 217.

158. See - Important Speeches of Nehru, pp. 1-14.

159. Ibid.

in a letter to Bose he wrote : "Am I a socialist or an individualist? Is there a necessary contradiction in the two terms? I suppose I am temperamentally and by training an individualist, and intellectually a socialist ... . I hope that Socialism does not kill or suppress individuality, indeed I am attached to it because it will release innumerable individuals from economic and cultural bondage."<sup>160</sup> Without going into the debate as to why Nehru's socialism mellowed down over the years and particularly between 1936-39, it is significant to note, however, that, "step by step and stage by stage there was a gradual conversion to the views and practices of Gandhi."<sup>161</sup> Earlier Nehru had said of Gandhi : "ideologically he was sometimes amazingly backwards, much that he says seems to fit in with a medieval Christian saint and not at all with modern psychological experience and method."<sup>162</sup> Like Roy, he was opposed to Gandhi's mixing of religion and Politics.<sup>163</sup> How the change came about in Nehru, he himself answers it. "How we came to associate with Gandhijee politically and to become in many instances his devoted followers? The question is hard to answer ... . Personality is an indefinable thing,

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160. See - 'Nehru a bunch of Old Letters', Second edition, pp. 188-189.

161. See - Struggle for Freedom, Vol. VI, p. 554.

162. Ibid.

163. Interesting to note that in 1928, Gandhi had written to Nehru, "The differences between you and me, appear to me so vast and so radical that there seems to me no meeting ground between us."

See - F.G. Tendulkar, "The Mahatma", pp. 289-290, Vol. 8 (Letters).



a strange force that has power over the souls of man, and he possesses this in ample measure ... . He attracted people. They did not agree with his philosophy of life or even with many of his ideals. Often they did not understand him. But the action that he proposed was something tangible. Any action would have been welcome after the long tradition of inaction which our spineless politics had murdered, brave and effective action with an ethical halo about it had an irresistible appeal ... and we went with him although we did not accept his philosophy. Now he disciplined our lazy and demoralized people and made them work - not by force or any material inducement, but by a gentle look a soft word and above all by personal example."<sup>164</sup> It becomes quite clear from the quotation that Nehru was attracted to certain aspects of Gandhism particularly to the view that Nationalism should take precedence over and above everything else. Besides this, Nehru perhaps also realized, that the 'left', divided as it was, so could not provide an alternative to Gandhian leadership or methods. Too much emphasis on socialism, he thought, would merely divide the party and therefore for the present the Congress should concentrate on political independence.

Nehru's relations with Roy, as stated earlier were rather cordial in the sense that Nehru was much impressed by his intellectual capacities. We have also stated that Roy had much to do with the Karachi Resolution on Fundamental Rights which Nehru presented. In short, before Roy's arrest in 1931 Nehru was

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164. Struggle for Freedom, Vol. XI, p. 560.

much influenced and impressed by Roy. When Roy was released in 1936 he immediately met Nehru at Bareilly and was Nehru's guest at Anand Bhawan and at Nehru's insistence attended the Faizpur session of the Congress.<sup>165</sup> It appears that Roy after being released sought to utilize the Nehru in his efforts to radicalize the Congress. In fact, as Masani has rightly pointed out : "Pandit Nehru was one figure who was being sought by all, the Gandhians, the Communists, the Royists and the Socialists. Pandit Nehru in turn, while he was friendly towards all identified himself with none."<sup>166</sup> As we have just said, ultimately Gandhi's influence triumphed.

It is interesting to note that Nehru, since he first met Roy (i.e., 1927 Berlin) till the late 30's, was not only impressed by Roy but in fact admired him. But Roy, on the other hand, never thought very highly of him. In 1931, Roy said Nehru that he was, "very friendly but politically hopeless."<sup>167</sup> In his articles he attacked Nehru and his brand of socialism. After being released he wrote of Nehru "Greatmen who are not really great ... are uncertain qualities ... Pseudo-great men (were) a tiresome lot, (and) conceit, coverted by false modesty ... an incurable disease. And when the disease is made into a virtue and applauded as such even by those who are expected to know better, the problem becomes baffling."<sup>168</sup> Perhaps it could be that Roy was critical

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165. Referred earlier.

166. See - Masani, Op. cit., p. 65.

167. See - Letter from Roy to Louise Geissler dated March 16, 1931, referred in Haithcox, op. cit., p. 187.

168. See - Letter from Roy to a friend in Feb. 1936, referred in Haithcox, Op. cit., p. 245.

of Nehru because Nehru became more and more attracted towards Gandhi and in fact, Nehru seldom took a stand against Gandhi. In 1945 Roy wrote of Nehru : "a thoughtless vain, egocentric, popularity hunting demagogue, who is popular among congressmen with a 'modern outlook' because his demagogy rationalizes Gandhi's irrationalism and supplies a pseudo-socialist veneer to reactionary nationalism. His modernism serves the undemocratic purpose of the Congress."<sup>169</sup> It can be easily inferred from this that Roy never acknowledged Nehru as a socialist. (which Nehru till his death claimed he was). And on this point, Roy perhaps is right. Nehru in the late 20's and early 30's had spoken and written extensively on socialism but his actions in the late 30's were good examples of Gandhi's influence working on him. Nehru's political behaviour then and after independence also compels us to conclude that in practice he was often reactionary -- although often it was as a measure of expediency. Nonetheless we could safely conclude that his mental make up was a mixture of 19th century, British Liberalism, and Fabian Socialism in which the former often predominates.<sup>169a</sup> Burns has also remarked that Nehru's branch of socialism defending mixed economy cannot be categorized as Socialism.<sup>170</sup> After independence his socialism further mellowed

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169. See - Naithcox, Op. cit., p. 246.

169a In England Nehru was much influenced the Fabians i.e., Webbs and Laski also. But like Laski who used Marxian terminology but did not draw Marxian conclusions, Nehru similarly used socialistic language but does not draw socialistic conclusions.

170. See - Burns - 'Ideas in Conflict' - Chapter on Socialism Opening page.

in fact there is a gradual retreat from his earlier concept of Socialism. The roots of Nehru's socialism lay in a revulsion against imperialism, hatred of economic exploitation. But with the end of imperial rule in India, Nehru had to combine socialism with the practice of democracy. Therefore, his socialism after independence was pragmatic. He has often been described as a gradualist socialist and a pragmatic socialist. And it is said, in his defence, that such a measure was essential to reconcile various social forces and thus to prevent the disruption of social fabric. But it can be said with equal amount of force that the gradualist approach reveals Nehru's weakness, his inability to side the waves of social revolution.<sup>171</sup> Without going into the debate we can safely conclude that Nehru's Socialism had travelled a long way since its inception. He no longer believed, as he once did, that, "socialism means revolutionary change in the social structure and the ending of vested interests in land and industry."<sup>172</sup>

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171. See - 'The Gentle Colossus' - a study of J.L. Nehru  
By Hiren Mukerjee.

172. See - Important Speeches of Nehru, pp. 4 to 14.

## CHAPTER VI

### PERSPECTIVES

#### The Last Phase

Strictly speaking the last phase of Roy's life (1940-1954) is outside the scope of this work. But as a major part of this work has been concerned with Roy and his activities, a brief mention about the last phase of his life becomes essential in order to complete the study. Roy's main purpose during this phase was to develop the philosophy of 'New Humanism'. In other words the last phase marks a transition from 'Marxism' to 'New Humanism'.

The Second World War brought a revolutionary change in the political situation in the country. Amongst the people there was a widespread anti British sentiment and the general feeling was that advantage should be taken of this difficult situation in which the British Government had landed herself, to advance the cause of Indian Independence.<sup>1</sup> Roy, however, thought differently. He viewed the war as a struggle between democratic forces and fascist forces, and that unconditional support should be given

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1. See: V.P. Menon. 'The Transfer of Power in India', The British Government proclaimed India a belligerent country without consulting Indian opinion. Ibid., p. 60.

to the Allies so that the fascist forces are totally defeated.<sup>2</sup> He regarded it as a 'peoples' anti-fascist war,' as such all freedom loving people should give it <sup>an</sup> unconditional support. Only by supporting the British war efforts, he thought, the Indian people could work for their freedom. The successful conclusion of the war would inevitably result in India's independence therefore it was not necessary for Indians to wage a war of liberation.<sup>3</sup> But except for Roy and his few followers the whole nation was against the British rule. In 1942, the Congress started the 'Quit India' Movement. The movement led by Gandhi involved the whole country in a virtual rebellion against the Government.<sup>4</sup> Roy strongly opposed the movement; according to him it sprang from feelings of motivated animosity against the British and that Congress had failed to take into account the damage that were involved in weakening the British War effort and necessarily the allied cause in a combat against fascism. By opposing the Quit India Movement, Roy alienated himself from

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2. M.N. Roy - War and Revolution 1942, p. 20.

3. For the conclusion that the War would bring freedom, Roy relied on his decolonization theory.

See Sanker Ghose, op. cit., p. 164.

4. The CPI till October 1941 had maintained that the War is an imperialist war. Meanwhile the C.P.C.B. declared that the War is a 'People's War'. Following it the CPI also came out with a statement that the war was a 'People's War'.

See - Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., pp. 199-206.

intellectual efforts to evolve a philosophy which would harmonize the process of physical nature, social evolution and will and emotions of man.<sup>8</sup> Roy, who, it should be recalled, had been a consistent advocate of class struggle now began to emphasise 'the cohesive factor in social organization'. Towards the closing years of the war Roy more clearly visualized the inadequacies of Marxism. Neither capitalism nor communism he thought was an answer to the bipolar character of the world that had emerged out of the war. He strongly felt the need for a new philosophy which could go beyond communism resulting in a socio-economic structure where freedom and equality can be reconciled, thus offering the individual a free environment for the development of his personality and for release of his creative energies. Thinking on these lines, Roy arrived at the philosophy of 'New Humanism'. He put forward these views at a conference of the Radical Democratic Party, held at Bombay in December 1946, in the form of 'Twenty Two Theses'. After a few modifications a "Humanist Manifesto" embodying the socio-political ideas of the 'Twenty Two Theses' was brought out. Published later (August 1947) as "New Humanism".<sup>9</sup>

'New Humanism' of Roy, rejects the materialism of Marxism as dogmatic and unscientific, his interpretation of history as

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8. See 'Scientific Politics', M.N. Roy, p. 8.

During the same time a similar transition took place in certain other Indian leaders e.g., Jaya Prakash, Masani, Hambodiripad. See - S. Ghose, Ibid.

fascist, socialist, communist, or any other kind -- which will gradually disappear under the impact of twentieth century Renaissance of Man."<sup>13</sup> The entire approach of Roy was individualistic. The individual, he thought, should not be subordinated either to a nation or to a class ; "The individual should not lose his identity in the collective ego of nation or of the class." The 'New Humanism' of Roy is different from the French and German Schools of humanism of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

In the economic and political field the philosophy of 'New Humanism' rejects both capitalism and Communism and advocates Cooperative Economy. By Cooperative Economy he implied that economic life of society to be reorganized on the basis mutual cooperation independent of state interference. This new economic concept would consist of a net work of consumer's and producer's cooperatives and the economic activities of society would be conducted and coordinated by the people through these institutions. Its essence was to apply the principle of decentralization to the economic organization of society through these co-operatives.<sup>15</sup> Roy also advocated this decentralization on the political plane. On the political plane the problem before Roy was to devise an institutional framework in which the ideal of people's sovereignty would be realized in modern big states without any delegation of power to the representatives of the people. New Humanism visualizes such an institutional framework

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13. Ibid., Vol. II, 310.

14. See - V.P. Varma, op. cit., pp. 458-459.

15. Political Philosophy of M.N. Roy - G.P. Bhattacharya, pp. 201-202.



and calls it 'Radical Democracy' or 'Organized Democracy'. The basic unit of this is not the atomised individual, but the people of a locality organized, in what is called 'People's Committee'. Roy was of the view that large modern states the individual cannot exercise his sovereign power whatever may be his right in theory. Roy, therefore, proposed that the unit of really democratic state should not be single helpless individuals, but small groups called 'People's Committees'. These People's Committees would function, on the one hand, as units of local self government, and on the other hand they would function as 'local republics', controlling and guiding the entire state machinery. Roy perhaps tried to realize the ideal of direct democracy in the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> By advocating decentralization and dispersal on the economic and political plane, Roy thought that the problems confronting the west could be avoided in India (e.g., problem of 'mass' society and 'mass' culture confronting the industrialized west). Both economic and Political democracy, Roy thought would have to function simultaneously.<sup>17</sup>

Organized democracy Roy believed would foster the notion of participant citizenship. For the realization of the individual the minimization of social, economic and political restraints is essential. To make the citizens conscious of their social and moral responsibilities there will be political schools, these schools would also train the individuals in the discharge of

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16. Constitution of India a draft - M.N. Roy, p. 16.

17. Principles of Radical Democracy - Ten. M.N. Roy.

their duties. Besides a constant control over the governors will be exercised through direct democratic checks like recall and referendum. People will vote "not on party or sectional or parochial considerations but to raise to the top men of moral integrity, political freedom of choice and spiritual strength."<sup>18</sup> Roy, however, realized that this ideal of organized democracy and partyless democracy cannot be immediately realized. It requires raising the moral of the people which in turn implies a continuous education.<sup>19</sup> Therefore for a transitional period Roy suggests that a 'Council of State' should wield the residuary power. The professional groups -- engineers, economists, scientists, doctors, teachers, jurists and other sections engaged in the advancement of art and knowledge should recommend a certain number for membership of the council. The chief executive will nominate them along with a few others whom he thinks are qualified. This council will regulate plan and execute the economic political, social and cultural aspects of the state.<sup>20</sup>

'New Humanism' was an effort on the part of Roy to evolve a new social and ethical philosophy which in application would be free from the inadequacies of Liberalism and Marxism. (He himself acknowledged he wanted to go 'beyond Marxism'). But really speaking, Roy merely attempted to revive in the mid

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18. V.P. Varma, op. cit., p. 462.

19. Principles of Radical Democracy, Article Twenty, M.N. Roy.

20. V.P. Varma, op. cit., p. 463, also Principles of Radical Democracy, M.N. Roy.

twentieth century -- (the age of socialism) the literal humanism of the premarxian days. The values of New Humanism are all, by and large liberal values. Better say New Humanism of Roy is nineteenth century liberalism, wrapped in a different phraseology in order to be applied to the twentieth century socialistic age. Apart from this, there are too many contradictions in the philosophy of 'New Humanism'. Prof. V.P. Varma has very well brought them out and has also drawn our attention to the fact that there is nothing very novel in the philosophy of New Humanism.

At this juncture it becomes necessary to pause and reflect, as to why, Roy who had been an ardent follower and firm believer in the teaching of Marx rejected Marxism. Marxism it would be recalled had remained for Roy always a progressive force, a liberating movement, a philosophy transcending narrow domestic and nationalistic barriers. Even after being expelled from the Comintern he did not give up Marxism (although he perhaps did realize it meant ceiling his career within the Communist movement). But over the years he learnt of two simultaneous developments within Soviet Union which compelled him to revise his views. On the one hand, under Stalin, the revolutionary party was gradually being transformed into something completely different, into a new class (political bureaucracy) unconcerned with great ideals and interested only in every day pleasures of life. This new class relegated even the party to a second rank. Roy could not appreciate the character of this all

powerful, cruel and unscrupulous new class. On the other hand he learnt of the atrocities and brutalities being committed by Stalin in the name of building up socialism. These simultaneous developments compelled Roy to realize that Lenin's revolutionary communism was gradually being replaced by dogmatic communism. However, he accepted all this as a temporary or perhaps, as a necessary phase in the process of eliminating the bourgeoisie. But when in May 1943, Stalin dissolved the Comintern Roy was further disillusioned and as the war drew to its close his fears were coming true. These evolved from the misery and destruction of the war, not one, but two worlds, antagonistic to each other, each as oppressive as the other. With the establishment of Soviet control over Eastern Europe Roy gave up all hopes. The essence of modern communism became too apparent. The transition, "from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom", which as a disciple of Marx he had very highly valued, appeared to him an alien concept under contemporary communism. Consequently, he propounded the philosophy of 'New Humanism', laying stress on the freedom and dignity of the individual thereby emphasising the ultimate goal of Marxism (humanism).

#### Radicalization of the National Movement

During the early years of his association with the Communist International Roy was mainly concerned about the developing of a revolutionary movement in India. The theoretical basis had been laid down by Lenin's thesis on the national and colonial question, improved and augmented by Roy's supplementary

thesis. In the years that followed Roy established contacts with national movement in India and concentrated his efforts in giving it a revolutionary orientation. As a consequence in the twenties there sprang up communist groups in a number of places in India e.g., Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, Lahore and Madras. The 'Meerut Conspiracy Case' does provide testimony that Roy had raised a band of devoted communists in India. His writings during the period (e.g., India in Transition, One Year of Non-Cooperation, Aftermath of Non-Cooperation and articles in Vanguard and the Masses) not only gave the Indian intellectuals an introduction to Marxism but also placed before them for the first time a concrete programme of socio economic revolution. As a result of his strenuous efforts and constant direction there had been established apart from the C.P.I., Workers and Peasants Parties in Bombay, Bengal, Punjab and the United Provinces. Within the Indian National Congress there was emerging a left wing, in the industrial centres the communists had been successful in entering the labour field. The strikes in 1928-29, do clearly indicate that workers in India were emerging as a political force, a development of considerable significance. The point is that Roy's was the first significant effort to radicalize the national movement through the ideology and programme of Marxism. Throughout the succeeding period of national struggle socialist ideas gradually gained currency.

Meanwhile the sixth Comintern Congress took a sharp turn to the left. The Comintern abandoned the tactics of united front. Roy was in sharp disagreement with this new line of the

Comintern. As a result he was expelled from the Comintern. At the same time the British Government in India rounded up all leading communists in connection with the "Meerut Conspiracy Case". These places were filled in by younger members who had neither the experience nor the capacity. They blindly followed the new comintern line thereby placing themselves in opposition to the national movement which was gaining momentum under the banner of the Indian National Congress. By following the new Comintern line the Communist Party of India was not only destroying the communist movement but also missing an unique opportunity to radicalize penetrate and capture the national movement. Roy saw a process of class differentiation at work within the national movement -- an increasing number of congressmen were advocating socialism. Therefore in order to give proper direction to the communist movement, radical and revolutionary orientation to the national movement, Roy reached India (December, 1930).

Within a few months - (seven) he made a considerable impact on a section of the Indian National Congress. He was present at the famous 'Karanchi Session' of the Congress and was the moving spirit behind the resolution of 'Fundamental Rights'. The Fundamental Rights resolution was the first commitment of the Congress to socio-economic goals. Roy also took a keen interest in the revival of trade union movement, (It had been destroyed because of the ultra left line pursued by Indian Communists). He also prepared the 'Platform of Unity', which later became the basis of unity in the trade union

movement. The Congress, till now had not paid sufficient attention towards the rural areas. To Roy the condition of the peasants appeared deplorable, therefore before his arrest he indulged in the peasant agitation and took up their cause in the United Provinces. By taking up their cause he drew attention to their miserable conditions thereby compelling the Congress to go to the villages and take up their cause. In other words Roy was instrumental in compelling the Congress to broaden its base. He was arrested in July 1931 and was released in November 1936.

During the period of his imprisonment his followers continued the work he had begun. In the political and trade union movement the Roy group did emerge as a force. Under his guidance and direction the Royists succeeded in uniting the trade union movement. It was because of his strenuous efforts and guidance that the Royists along with the Socialists by 1936 succeeded in controlling the AITUC. By repeatedly emphasising (through personal example and by his writings) the relevance of socio-economic policies, Roy gave the Congress Party in particular, and the national movement in general, a sense of direction. By taking up the peasants cause he compelled the Congress Party to broaden its base thereby radicalizing its lower rank and file, thus making the Congress a much more representative organisation.

During the mid thirties the radicalization of the national movement is exemplified by the rise and growth of the Congress

Socialist Party. Broadly speaking the C.S.P. had twin aims -- to establish an anti imperialist front and to make the Congress a mass organization. Roy, it should be recalled had already suggested working on these lines. During the early years of the C.S.P. the Royists were rather active within it and contributed substantially in giving the C.S.P. programme and policies a socialistic orientation. Roy's influence was substantial among the leading personalities of the C.S.P. and the C.S.P. plan and programme evolved on the lines suggested by Roy (See Chapter V). In short the C.S.P. wanted to create a social base for the extension of democracy, a view which Roy had been advocating for quite sometime now (See Roy's Minimum Programme - Chapter IV).

Over the years (1934-36) Roy gradually became sceptical about the ideological commitments of the C.S.P. leaders, he also realized that by harping too much on socialism the party was isolating itself from the national struggle. Therefore on being released he joined the Indian National Congress and till the beginning of the Second World War made all efforts to radicalize and democratize the Congress so that it could be made into a more effective instrument of national revolution. He however, had to work against many odds during this period. The rightists always suspected him and the leftists thought he had become a revisionist. His approach was certainly more pragmatic during these few years. On the one hand he opposed collective affiliation, on the other hand was favourable to the idea of the Congress contesting elections and accepting offices



(C.S.P. was not). Elections would be thought help in popularizing a more radical programme of action which should help in the development of mass agitation in support of a number of concretely formulated minimum demands.

Roy along with the socialists did much spade work to popularize the idea of 'United Front'. Although the unification of leftist forces was short lived (because differences of fundamental nature existed since the beginning - See Chapter V) but the union of leftist forces, on the one hand, did build up leftist pressure within the national movement, On the other hand the left wing within the Congress gained greater strength (the growing strength and force of the left is clearly revealed in the Congress presidential elections during 1937-1939 and in the labour front - See Chapter V).

The cumulative effect was that the Congress heralding the national movement was compelled to adopt radical socio-economic resolutions and forced to broaden its base. As a consequence the reactionary influence so dominant till now was also being curbed.

By way of conclusion we could now venture to say that Roy contributed substantially during the period (1920-40) towards the radicalising of the national movement. By his constant endeavour, in the labour front, among the peasants, among the students, within the C.S.P. and lastly but not the least - important within the Indian National Congress, he succeeded in creating a consensus for socialism within the national movement.

This is not to suggest that he was the only voice propagating socialism, or that he was the first to do so (the C.S.P. the Congress Left etc., all talked of socialism then but as has been shown in the last chapter their socialism was vague ambiguous). The point however is that Roy firstly made the masses conscious of their grievances and the contradictions in our social structure and then as a remedy, he projected socialism in a consistent form. Socialism was already there it was scattered or as Narendra Dev said it, "was in the air", Roy channelized this socialism which was in the air in proper direction. Credit also should be given to Roy for radicalizing sections within the mass structure of the Congress base (e.g., Workers, Peasants, Youth).

#### Significance :

To begin with there is no doubt that personally Roy remained a failure. Within the national movement he failed to establish his credentials. The reasons are many and we have dealt with some in the last chapter. Certain traits of his personality did contribute substantially for his isolation. For instance he was rather uncompromising, too impatient at times and too frank to conceal his motives, besides he always underestimated Gandhi's hold on the national movement. But historical verdict cannot be established by certain traits of character or by one's liking or disliking a person. But this perhaps appears to be the case with Roy. The text books on the

national movement seldom mention him and if they do they dismiss him in a few lines. The Marxist scholars have been most unsympathetic towards him, the third phase of his life (New Humanism) provided them a good opportunity to attack him. They have not laboured to look towards the second phase of his life (1920-1940 Marxist Phase) and his contributions towards the radicalization of the national movement. On the other hand the non Marxist scholars in evaluating Roy's contributions have taken into account the third phase of his life i.e., Philosophy of New Humanism, and have concluded that this is essentially nineteenth century liberalism, therefore as a political thinker Roy does not occupy a prominent place in contemporary Indian History or thought.

It appears however, that justice has not been done to him. Scholars have solely evaluated him on the basis of the third phase of his life. Which properly speaking is a period of withdrawal it can be characterized as a negative phase of his life. This third phase, was a phase of withdrawal, it was the cumulative result of frustrations. The Congress leaderships attitude towards the second world war disillusioned him. His attempt at radicalization were aimed not only towards broadening the base of the Congress but also towards the moving of the Congress leadership to the left. The Congress by not recognizing the war as 'Anti Fascist' compelled him to admit that his attempt at radicalizing has had not much substantial impact and that the hold of conservative leadership was still too dominant. The withdrawal also reflects his impatience at the slow pace of

change in field of ideas in India. The point is that the third phase is a nihilist phase, a period characterizing frustration therefore cannot be, better say, should not be taken into account while evaluating him. Similarly the first phase cannot be the basis of evaluation as it is politically barren. Therefore we have to evaluate Roy's significance and place in contemporary history on the basis of the second phase of his life (Marxist Phase 1920-1940). This undoubtedly is the most constructive and positive phase of his life. We have already dealt it. He was the moving spirit behind the Radicalization of the national movement during this period, and this certainly gives him an important place in the history of Indian Political Movement. This is Roy's most significant contribution. Scholars have been of the view that during the thirties Roy's approach and views were not strictly marxism and that he often contradicts himself during the period. This perhaps is not the case. Roy's views were not static because like Lenin he was also involved in the political process therefore as his experience widened he did change his ideas to some extent. In fact Marxism is not a static doctrine and Roy like Lenin was opposed to Left Doctrinaireism and dogmatism. Neo Marxism writers also emphasise that every nation has to adopt its own approach towards the accomplishment of a revolution. ("The revolutionary struggle has crossed its reformation, there is no longer any Pope to take counsel of ... every nation has to evolve its own ideology." DERRY REGIS ; THE OUTCAST). Therefore we could say that Roy's approach and views during the thirties were not contradictory or dogmatic but pragmatic.

Secondly in assessing Roy's contribution we have also to take into account the post independence political situation. After independence, broadly speaking, we see three streams of ideas evolving. These can be broadly classified as : (a) The conservative stream, which in Marxian terminology is known as Reactionism. (b) The Communist stream extending from CPI to CPI (M.L.). (c) The Middle stream advocating various types of socialism more particularly Democratic Socialism. By way of conclusion we may say that Roy was the precursor of the Communist stream and the Middle stream, not in the sense that there is a continuous heritage, but in the sense that what Roy conceived and advocated in the 20's and 30's, the Communists, Congress and the Socialists are advocating to-day in India.

In his political evolution during 1920-1940, Roy passes through various stages. The transition is from ideal to possible. The broad structure of the Indian Left to-day can be conceived in the political evolution of Roy's views during these years (1920-1940). For instance Roy's views during the early twenties have much in common with the ideological stand of the CPI (M) and CMI (M-L) -- full faith in the proletariat, reference to national bourgeoisie as a compromising force, faith in armed struggle and the establishment of peoples democracy. Since the late twenties Roy advocated what the CPI advocates to-day -- development of a national democratic front as a multi class and multi party platform, the idea of united front (adopted by CPI and CPI (M) after the fourth general election), exclusive leadership of the proletariat not essential etc. Similarly what

the Congress advocated after Independence, e.g., establishment of Socialist society, equitable distribution of wealth (Avasi Session, 1955), nationalization of Banks (1969) abolition of land-lordism and privy purses etc., all these ideas can be found in the minimum programme of Roy and later in the draft constitution which he prepared in 1944. The point is whatever the Indian Left is advocating to-day, (whether it is the CPM or the Ruling Congress) was put forward and advocated by Roy during the second phase of his life. It is in this sense that the Marxist phase of his life certainly appears more positive and meaningful and his contributions more lasting.

The Indian Left to-day should in all earnestness and sincerity acknowledge its indebtedness to Roy, thereby giving him a significant place in Contemporary Indian History and Thought.

APPENDIX - 7

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Certified by Waman Rao Kulkarni, Secretary of the Independence of India League, Bombay, as having been drafted by M.N. Roy.

This Congress declares that :

The goal of the Indian National Congress is to secure the freedom of the Indian people from foreign domination. Self-government within the British Empire -- even full Dominion Status will not liberate the bulk of the Indian people from the burden of the colonial exploitation. A Dominion constitution will confer some political rights upon a small upper section of the Indian people. It will make them economic concessions not by foregoing an iota of imperialist booty, but at the expense of the Indian masses.

2. The first condition for complete national independence is the transfer of all power to the people. But political power is never transferred by the ruler to the ruled voluntarily or automatically. Therefore, the task of the National Congress is to mobilize and organize the people for the capture of political power.

3. The Delhi agreement commits the Congress to the principle of self-government within the British Empire. Negotiation with Imperialism on the basis of that agreement will lead, at the very best, to Dominion Status. Participation in any such negotiation means renunciation of the right of the determination of the Indian people. For, any constitution so framed could become law only on the sanction of the British Parliament. On the other hand, it is an illusion to believe that any constitution liberating the Indian people from imperialist domination will ever be sanctioned by the British Parliament. So, self-government attained through negotia-

tion with the foreign rulers will always be a sham, as far as the masses of the people are concerned. This being the case, the Delhi agreement is incompatible with the struggle for the realization of the national freedom. The Congress therefore repudiates it and declares the firm determination to assert in practice the right of the Indian people to self-determination.

4. The constitution of the Free Indian State can be promulgated only by a democratic sovereign body elected for the purpose by those sections of the Indian people whose interests are entirely irreconcilable with imperialism even in a veiled form as it would be under Dominion Status. The struggle for the assertion of the right of self-determination, therefore, should begin with the agitation for the election of a CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, and culminate in the rise of the organ of democratic power.

5. While initiating the struggle for the capture of power, the Congress takes note of the relation of forces in the struggle. A section of the Indian people never stood for national independence. Lately, they have definitely allied themselves with imperialism as against the struggle of the majority of the Indian people for national freedom. They condemned the independence resolution of the Congress no less vehemently than did the imperialists. They went to the Round Table Conference defying the decision of the Congress. In the struggle for freedom the oppressed and exploited masses, constituting over ninety per cent, of the population, come up against the united front of the foreign imperialism and the Indian upper classes (princes, landlords and capitalists). The decisions of the Round Table Conference are meant to cement this counter revolutionary united front.



6. In view of this relation of forces the Congress declares the following as the fundamental principles of the organic law of the free Indian State :-

- (a) Transfer of all power to the oppressed and exploited masses;
- (b) Abolition of the Native State, and parasitic landlords;
- (c) Freedom of the peasantry from all exploitation and exaction so that the greater part of their surplus production remains in their possession;
- (d) Nationalisation of land, public utilities, mineral resources and banks;
- (e) Unconditional repudiation of debts contracted by the irresponsible Government;
- (f) An irreducible standard of living for the workers through the introduction of minimum wage, limited hours of labour, healthy conditions of work, insurance against unemployment sickness, old age, etc.;
- (g) Control of the economic life of the country by the workers and peasants to guarantee that the fruits of national freedom will not be usurped by the fortunate few.

7. Learning from the experience of other countries, the Congress rejects formal parliamentary democracy which does not confer any real power on the masses; further, in view of the fact that a section of the Indian people has definitely allied itself with imperialism against the popular striving for freedom, the Constituent Assembly shall necessarily be elected only by those who require freedom from imperialist domination as the first condition for progress and prosperity. They constitute more than ninety per cent of the population.

8. In order to avoid the discredited path of Parliamentary democracy, the Constituent Assembly will be elected not by individual voters, but by local committees of deputies from the organization of the various oppressed and exploited classes, namely workers, peasants, artisans, small traders, employees, poor intellectuals, soldiers, and policemen. Thus elected, the Constituent Assembly will remain in close contact with the organised masses, being the organ through which these will exercise political power effectively.

9. The immediate task is to organize the various oppressed and exploited classes in the course of an unrelenting struggle with partial demands, such as (a) higher wages, (b) eight-hour day, (c) better conditions of labour, (d) unemployment, sickness, old age and maternity insurance at the cost of the employers, (e) reduction of inland rent or tax by 25 per cent, (f) annulment of the indebtedness of the poor peasants, artisans and workers, (g) complete exemption of rent and taxes for peasants living upon "uneconomic holdings"; (h) control of usury interest not to exceed six per cent per annum, (i) rent of dwelling quarters in towns not to be more than ten per cent, of the wage or salary of the occupant, (j) abolition of all indirect taxes, (k) free primary education, (l) freedom of press, speech and association.

10. The next stage will be to set up local committees to co-ordinate the struggle of the various classes in the common struggle for the capture of political power. Finally, the local committees shall elect the organ of democratic sovereignty to assume supreme power and promulgate the constitution of the free Indian State on the basis of the principles formulated above.

## *APPENDIX - II*

### ALL-INDIA CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

#### PROGRAMME

##### Objective ;

1. Transfer of all power to the producing masses.
2. Development of the economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the State.
3. Socialisation of key and principal industries (e.g., Steel, Cotton, Jute, Railways, Shipping, Plantations, Mines), Banks, Insurance and Public Utilities with a view to the progressive socialisation of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange.
4. State monopoly of foreign trade.
5. Organisation of co-operatives for production, distribution and credit in the unsocialised sector of economic life.
6. Elimination of princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters without compensation.
7. Re-distribution of land to peasants.
8. Encouragement and promotion of co-operative and collective farming by the State.
9. Liquidation of debts owing by peasants and workers.
10. Recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the State.
11. "To every one according to his needs and from every one according to his capacity" to be the basis ultimately of distribution and production of economic goods.
12. Adult franchise on a functional basis.
13. No support to, or discrimination between, religions by the State and no recognition of any distinction based on caste

or community.

14. No discrimination between the sexes by the State.

15. Repudiation of the so-called Public Debt of India.

#### Plan of Action :

1. Work within the Indian National Congress with a view to secure its acceptance of the objects and programme of the Party.

2. Organisation of peasant and labour unions, and entry into such unions where they exist, for the purpose of developing and participating in the day to day economic and political struggles of peasants and workers and intensifying the class struggle of the masses and of creating a powerful mass movement for the achievement of Independence and Socialism.

3. Organisation of, and participation in Youth leagues, women's organisations, Volunteer organisations, etc., etc., for the purpose of getting their support to the programme of the Party.

4. Active opposition to all imperialist wars and the utilisation of such and other crises for the intensification of the national struggle.

5. Refusal to enter at any stage into negotiations on the constitutional issue with the British Government.

6. Convening after the capture of power of a Constituent Assembly elected by local committees of deputies of workers, peasants and other exploited classes for the purpose of formulating a Constitution for the Indian State.

#### IMMEDIATE DEMANDS

##### Political :

1. Freedom of speech and of the Press.

2. Freedom of association and combination.

3. Repeal of all anti-national and anti-labour laws.

4. Re-instatement of all farmers and tenants deprived of their lands owing to their participation in the movement for National Independence.

5. Release of all political prisoners detained without trial and withdrawal of all orders of externment, internment or restraint on political grounds.

6. Free and compulsory primary education and the liquidation of adult illiteracy.

7. Drastic reduction, by at least 50 per cent, of the military expenditure of the Government of India.

8. Regulation and control of religious endowments.

#### Economic ;

9. Municipalisation of Public Utilities.

10. Control of usury, direct and indirect.

11. Liquidation of debts owed by workers and peasants.

12. A steeply graduated tax on all incomes, including incomes from agriculture, above a fixed minimum.

13. Graduated death duties.

#### Concerning Labour ;

14. Freedom of labour from serfdom and conditions bordering on serfdom.

15. The right to form unions, to strike and to picket.

16. Compulsory recognition of unions by employers.

17. A living wage, a 40-hour week and healthy quarters and conditions of work.

18. Insurance against unemployment, sickness, accident, old.

age, etc.

19. One month's leave every year with full pay to all workers and two months' leave with full pay to women workers during maternity.

20. Prohibition against employment of children of school-going age in factories, and women and of children under sixteen underground.

21. Equal wages for equal work.

22. Weekly payment of wages whenever demanded.

#### Agrarian :

23. Elimination of landlordism in zamindari and talukdari areas without compensation.

24. Encouragement of co-operative farming.

25. Liquidation of arrears of rent.

26. Complete exemption from rents and taxes of all peasants with uneconomic holdings.

27. Reduction of rent and land revenue by at least 50 per cent.

28. Abolition and penalisation of all feudal and semi-feudal levies on the peasantry.

29. Penalisation of illegal exactions and forced labour.

30. Freedom from attachment in execution of rent or money decrees of homestead, agricultural resources and that portion of a peasant's holding which is just sufficient to maintain an average peasant family.

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